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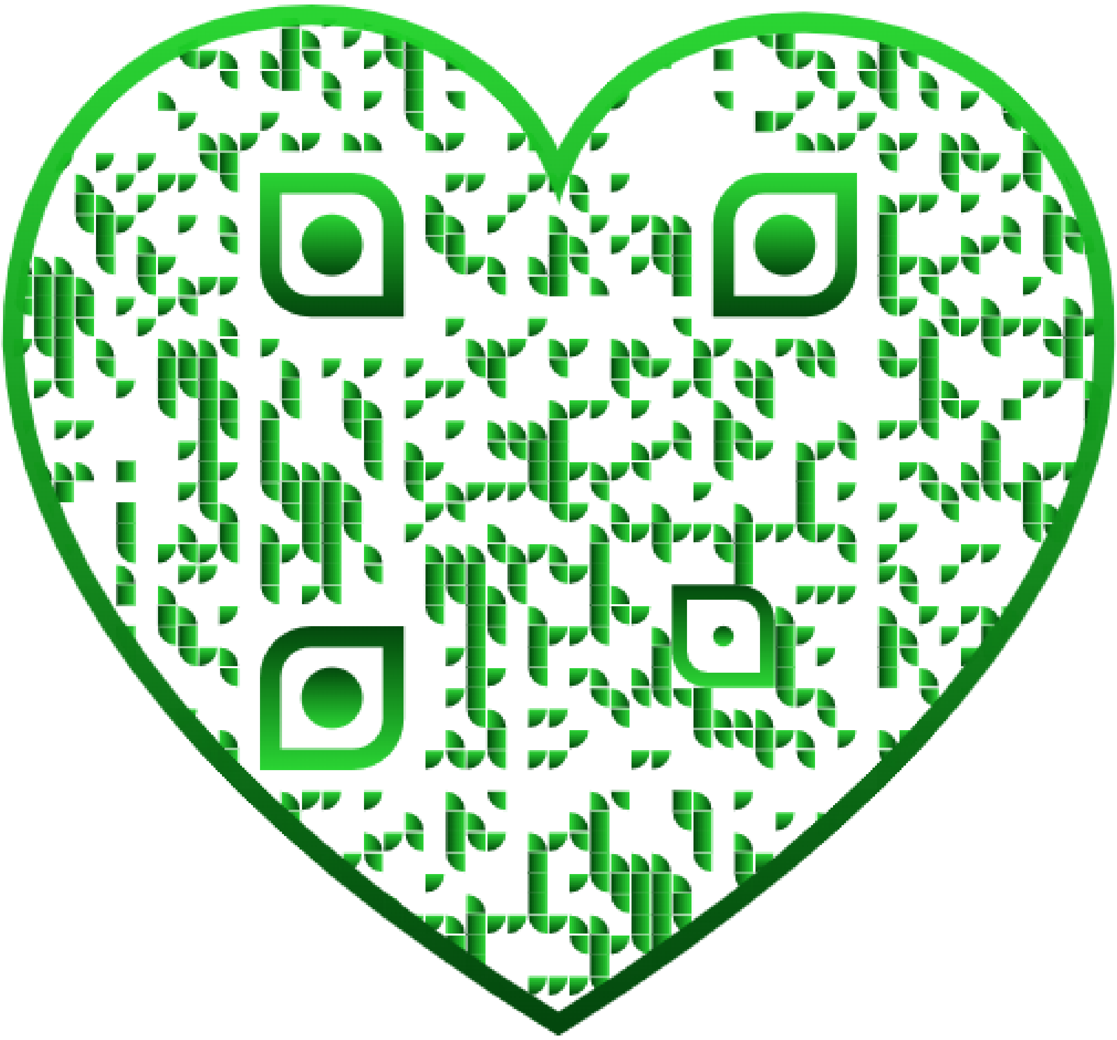

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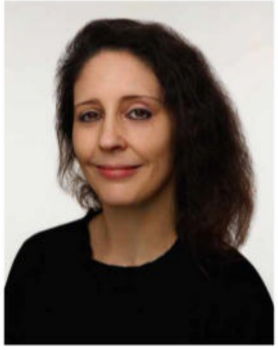
Welcome



When Sir Andrew Davis died on 20 April, the outpouring of affection from the musical world spoke for itself. Davis was not only a gifted and charismatic conductor, but a witty and warm human being, whose dozen turns leading the Last Night of the Proms were distinguished by memorably sparky addresses from the podium. That he died less than a week before the launch of the 2024 Proms season seemed somehow grossly unfair – especially as the pre-printed programme poignantly listed his intended appearance as conductor laureate of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Stravinsky, Schumann and Steve Reich on 30 August.

Shortly before he died, Sir Andrew spoke to Amanda Holloway about the works that shaped his life and career for our *Music That Changed Me* feature; read his typically engaging and humane responses on page 106.

Elsewhere in this special Proms issue, current BBC Symphony chief conductor Sakari Oramo speaks to John Allison about his decade at the helm of an orchestra indelibly associated with the world's greatest classical music festival on page 34, while on page 56, Clare Stevens catches up with former Proms director Roger Wright. Plus, Richard Morrison shares his favourite moments from 60 years of Proms attendance on page 27, and there are complete Proms listings on page 28.

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

John Allison

Editor, Opera magazine

'Though we meet just across from the Albert Hall, where he conducts four Proms this summer, conversation with Sakari Oramo is far from South Ken-centric: the Finnish maestro has a stimulatingly wide view of the world.' ***Page 34***

Clare Stevens

Writer and editor

'Full disclosure: I've known Roger Wright since he and my husband used to lob Maltesers to each other over the bookshelves when working at the British Music Information Centre. It was a joy to reflect on his contributions since then.' ***Page 56***

Leah Broad

Academic and author

'Elizabeth Maconchy's works deserve so much more recognition than they currently enjoy. It was a joy to explore her life, especially her friendships with fellow composers Vaughan Williams and Grace Williams!' ***Page 62***

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Contents

JULY 2024

FEATURES

28 **Cover:** Welcome to The Proms!
Your complete guide to this summer's concerts, including the *BBC Music* team's personal highlights

34 Perfect Finnish
Sakari Oramo, conductor of this year's Last Night of the Proms, shares his love of the job with *John Allison*

44 Olympic dreams
From Strauss having a sulk to an Elgar-inspired horse, *Jeremy Pound* charts a history of music at the Olympics

50 Pride and joy
Oliver Zeffman, founder of the Classical Pride festival, tells *Claire Jackson* about this summer's colourful event

56 Roger and out...
As he says farewell to Aldeburgh, chief executive Roger Wright assesses his handiwork with *Clare Stevens*

EVERY MONTH

8 Letters

12 The Full Score
The latest news and interviews from the music world

27 Richard Morrison

38 The BBC Music Magazine Interview
Cellist Laura van der Heijden on the pressures of recording and the joy of friends, with *Ariane Todes*

60 Musical Destinations
Charlotte Smith heads to Newport, Rhode Island, US

62 Composer of the Month
Rated and respected but still somehow neglected, Elizabeth Maconchy is explored by *Leah Broad*

66 Building a Library
Terry Williams on the best recordings of Dvořák's Fifth Symphony, a work of sunny spirits and good humour

100 Radio & TV

104 Crossword and Quiz

106 Music that Changed Me
Conductor Sir Andrew Davis

28 The BBC Proms

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EDITORIAL
Plus the national anthem we'd most like to hear played at the Olympics (see p44)
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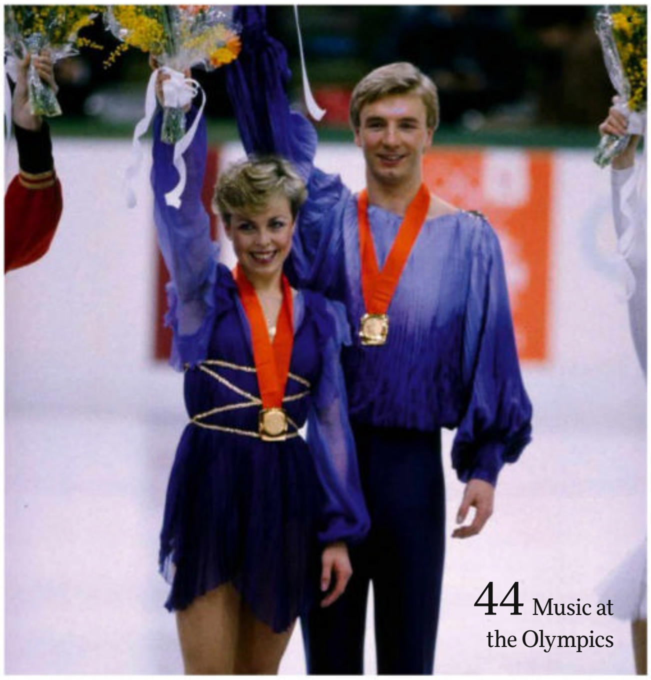
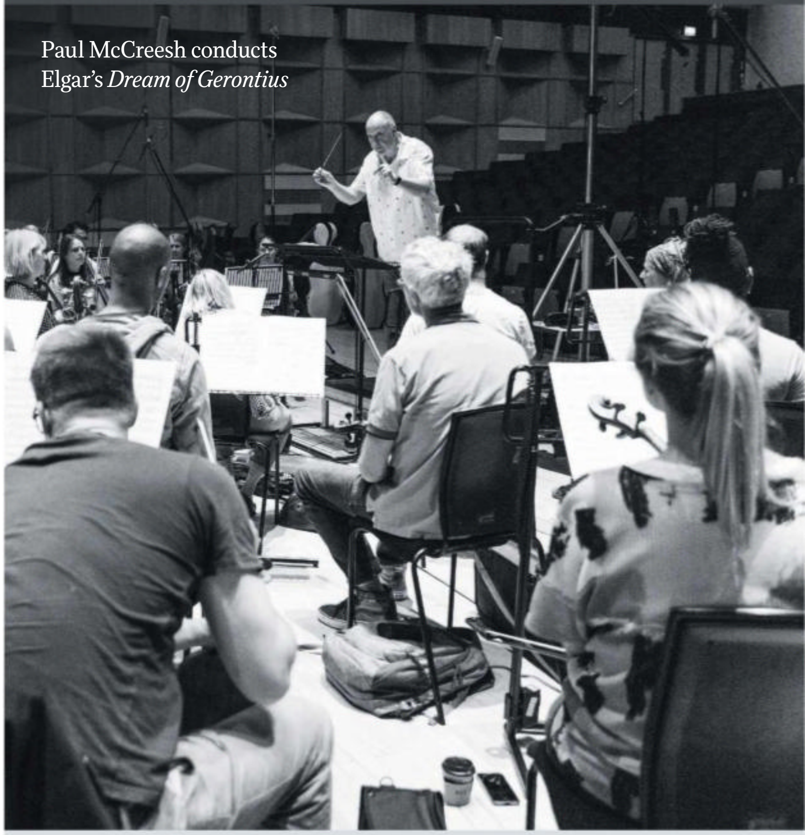
34 Sakari Oramo



44 Music at the Olympics

July reviews

Your guide to the best new recordings and books



Paul McCreesh conducts Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*

70 Recording of the Month

Elgar
The Dream of Gerontius

'This is unquestionably a great recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*, one that every Elgarian should have'

72 Orchestral 77 Concerto 80 Opera
82 Choral & Song 86 Chamber 90 Instrumental
93 Jazz 94 Brief Notes 96 Books 97 Audio
98 From the Archive 99 Reviews Index

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LETTER *of the* MONTH

Star player: Henryk Szeryng enjoyed life's perks

GETTY

The haves and have-nots

Bryan Lewis's letter regarding Neville Marriner's adventure with his Trio (May) brought back memories of a TV documentary presented some 50 years ago by Alan Whicker. He contrasted the lifestyles of a jet-set soloist, the Polish violinist Henryk Szeryng, and an artist just setting out on his career, British pianist Allan Schiller. Szeryng was shown arriving at Heathrow Airport with his retinue and making his way to his suite at Claridges prior to a recital at the Royal Festival Hall, while Schiller was making his way up north to a Music Club recital in his trusty Morris 1000 Estate. We saw Szeryng playing the Brahms D minor Sonata; then cut to Schiller having broken down in his Morris with his hands in the engine only a couple of hours before his recital. The adulation surrounding Szeryng was contrasted with Schiller – having finally surmounted all his obstacles and then staying overnight with the ultra-enthusiastic secretary of the Music Club, who insisted on playing piano duets.
***Hywel Jenkins,** Glastonbury*

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A great Elgarian

I was lucky enough to meet the Elgar scholar Jerrold Northrop Moore (see Obituaries, p23) more than 15 years ago, at a study weekend on Elgar and the Great War near his home in Broadway, Worcestershire. I had known of his work for years prior to that, thanks to 20 years of voluntary work in the archives of The Elgar Birthplace Museum. Researchers will be forever grateful to him for his scholarship, which often helped me out when I couldn't read one of the composer's original letters! I was lucky to have had afternoon tea with 'Jerry', as his friends knew him, and we went on to have some correspondence. I spoke to him on the telephone earlier this year, to congratulate him on reaching the age of 90. I trust that his work will continue to be an inspiration to all ages in the future.
***Ian Morgan,** Malvern Link*

Desirable discs

While I can't quite compete with Peter Draper's complete collection of *BBC Music* cover CDs (Letters, June), I have managed to be a subscriber since the first issue. The cover CDs have been a mixed bag, and of course there have been some duds: a lumpen Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique* in the early days sticks in the mind, as does an unbelievably kitsch performance by the Vienna Boys Choir. However, my top five of the 400 are as follows: a truly amazing Handel *Messiah* from Harry Christophers and the Sixteen (over two issues at the end of 1997); Schubert's String Quintet (1998); *Baltic Voyage* – music from Estonia (2010); Brahms's *German Requiem* (2013); Rachmaninov's Third Symphony and *The Isle of the Dead* (2023).
***Patrick Hoyte,** Minehead*

The editor replies:
We are always keen to hear which cover CDs our readers have enjoyed and, of course, disliked too. Do let us know!

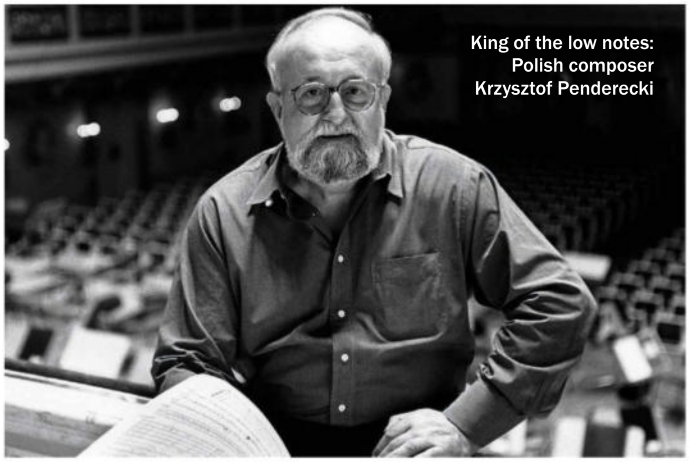
Delius on death

It was a shame that Jeremy Pound in his review of Requiems (May) did not include one of the most original and unusual: the Requiem by Delius. Delius's original title for the work was 'A Pagan Requiem' and the libretto, thought to be mostly by the composer himself and heavily influenced by Nietzsche, is an uncompromising statement of Delius's own contempt for conventional religion and his embrace of pantheism. The bleak message in the early sections of the work – that death is extinction – is mitigated by the glorious final section, a hymn to eternally renewing Nature that, as Eric Fenby put it, 'wins Delius lovers all over the globe'. Surely it is time for reappraisal of this

fascinating masterpiece?
***Stephen Cox,** Norwich*

Covid lingers on

Though I enjoyed your article celebrating *BBC Music*'s 400th issue (May), I despaired at your reference to 'socially distanced audiences – remember those?' This is still all too real for some. It is estimated that 1.2 million people are still shielding to various extents, and unless companies/venues recognise this, many of us are denied one of our greatest joys in life, i.e. live music. I seem to remember Richard Morrison also suggesting that digital access would become much more mainstream after the pandemic, and it is such a shame this doesn't seem to have happened. The irony is, giving distanced performances or streaming live concerts to be paid for online would bring more revenue for struggling companies, but it just seems to be too much effort. I have not been able to attend a live music event for almost four years, and I am certainly not the only one.
Name and address withheld



King of the low notes: Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki

How low can you go?

In your online article 'What's the lowest note ever sung?' (classical-music.com), you wrote that before Paul Mealor's *De Profundis*, the B flat in Rachmaninov's *Vespers* was the lowest note in the choral repertoire. This is incorrect. Just to give you a few examples: in Grechaninov's setting of the same *Vespers* (*All Night Vigil*) text as Rachmaninov, his Op. 59, there is a low A two octaves below middle C at the end of 'Ot yunosti moyeya' as well as at the end of 'Velikoye slavosloviye'; Chesnokov, also in his *All Night Vigil*, wrote low Bs, As and a low G at the end of 'Lord now lettest thou', and his other works also feature very low notes, such as in his Op. 27 *Tebe poem* (low A); Penderecki's *Song of the Cherubim*, meanwhile, contains a low F two octaves below middle C at the end. There are more low As, Bs and Gs in orthodox music; it's just that Rachmaninov's piece is the most well-known one in western choral circles.
***Marius Imholz,** Switzerland*

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The *full* score

Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews

The BBC Music Magazine Awards 2024

Some highlights from this year's sparkling ceremony at Kings Place in London

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AWARDS 2024
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A night to remember: (above) Chamber winners the Calidore Quartet give a heartfelt performance of the 'Cavatina' from Beethoven's String Quartet No 13; (right) Newcomer of the Year George Xiaoyuan Fu dazzles in Ravel; cellist Julian Lloyd Webber shares his thoughts on the evening

BBC music MAGAZINE
AWARDS 2024
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Smiles all round: (clockwise from above) Clive Myrie presents Recording of the Year to the Sinfonia of London's Rosenna East; Errollyn Wallen and Chi-chi Nwanoku share a private joke; Rebeca Omordia, Adam Binks, Martin Jones, Wallen and John Andrews with their Premiere award; presenters Linton Stephens and Katie Derham from Radio 3; Tasmin Little with Concerto winners Bomsori Kim and Christina Åstrand; the colourful Nicky Spence

JOHN MILLAR

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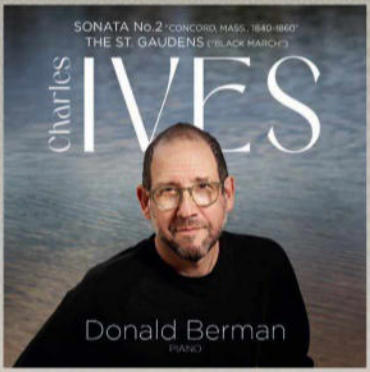

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CHRISTOPH CROISÉ

Cellist Christoph Croisé, together with violinist Andrey Baranov and pianist Alexander Panfilov, revel in Rachmaninoff's two early piano trios alongside arrangements of some of the composer's romantic songs.

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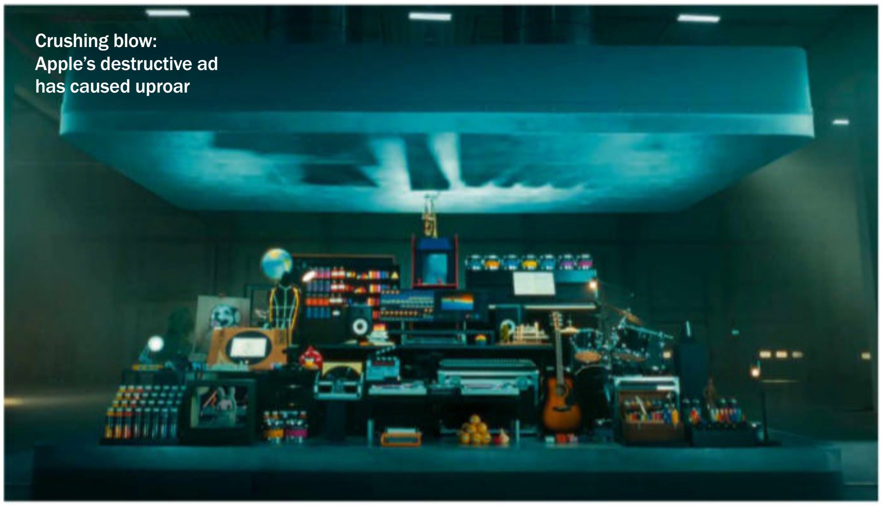
Musicians set the right tone for Downing Street future

A moment of sweet harmony occurred at the heart of British government recently, as the first concert in a new series called 'Notes from Downing Street' filled No. 11 with the music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Gershwin and David Schiff. Performed by players from the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the concert was enjoyed by an audience in the State Room of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's residence – including, we hope, Larry the Downing Street cat – and on Classic FM too. Details of further instalments in the series have yet to be announced, but we will be watching the comings and goings at the famous address with a keen interest in months to come.

Crunchy Apple leaves a very bitter taste


Crushing blow: Apple's destructive ad has caused uproar

Apple has apologetically withdrawn an advert for the latest edition of its iPad that showed objects including a trumpet, a piano and a bust of Beethoven being crushed. Described as 'the destruction of the human experience, courtesy of Silicon Valley' by actor Hugh Grant, the disturbing ad was not intended to be interpreted thus, said the tech giants. 'Our goal is to always celebrate the myriad of [sic] ways users express themselves and bring their ideas to life through iPad,' explained Tor Myhren, Apple's VP of marketing communications. 'We missed the mark with this video, and we're sorry.'

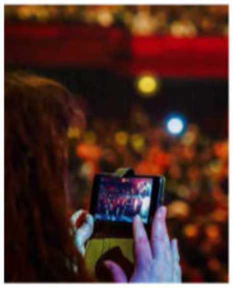
GETTY, APPLE/YOUTUBE ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK

Doomed prophetess: Sarah Connolly appears as Zarqa al Yamama in Riyadh

Connolly stars in Saudi opera first

Saudi Arabia has dipped its toe into the opera water with the staging of its first ever home-grown production. With mezzo Sarah Connolly in the title role, the two-act *Zarqa al Yamama* brought together European, Australian and Saudi performers in a score by composer Lee Bradshaw that mixed Western tradition and orchestration with a strong Arabic flavour. Far from easing the Riyadh audience in gently, however, Saudi librettist Saleh Zamana's plot drew on a grisly ancient folk tale about a Cassandra-like figure whose dark forebodings are ignored, resulting in bloody slaughter. Plans are now in place for a permanent opera house to be built in the Diriyah area of the Saudi capital.

CBSO phone move gets patchy reception



Sir Stephen Hough is one of several musicians who have raised an eyebrow at the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's decision to welcome phones at its concerts. 'I'm really excited to be playing Brahms 1 next season with one of my favourite orchestras, the CBSO,' wrote the pianist on X. 'I'm happy to be filmed on phones by the audience except for the following bars when I really need to concentrate and could be distracted: 1st movement: 91-118; 123-176; 185-199; 226-341; 352 to end; 2nd movement: 14-19; 21-27; 29-30; 33-58; 71 to end; 3rd movement: 1-36; 46-98; 122-167; 188-238; 275-333; 337-368; 376-410; 418-426; 434-442; 448 to end.' The CBSO has since clarified that it supports the use of phones 'at appropriate moments during concerts in a way that is considerate to those around them'.

Rising Stars

Three to look out for...

Olivia Warburton *Soprano*

Born: Lincolnshire, UK
Career highlight: Performing the title role in a new production of Frid's *Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank* for solo soprano and orchestra – undoubtedly my most challenging yet rewarding role to date.
Musical heroes: I have always been inspired by mezzo Anne Sofie von Otter's ability to adapt to so many different roles and styles while staying true to herself. I'm also a huge fan of singer and songwriter Jacob Collier, who shows such uninhibited freedom in his music making.
Dream concert: I would love to have a role written for my voice by a contemporary opera composer. Being involved in creating something brand new would be so exciting.

Curtis Stewart *Violinist/composer*

Born: Helsinki, Finland
Career highlight: Premiering a movement from my new Violin Concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Symphony Center. It is the first work of its kind for me, and the venue is so storied and gorgeous. This experience inches above performing at the Grammys!
Musical heroes: My mum, Elektra Kurtis, was a Greek/Polish/American violinist and I get my sense of constant experimentation from her. My dad, Bob Stewart, is a virtuoso tuba player and has played with jazz greats from Dizzy Gillespie to McCoy Tyner.
Dream concert: I've always dreamed of playing at the BBC Proms!

Alexandra Whittingham *Guitarist*

Born: Manchester, UK
Career highlight: Last year I was invited to play at the Cayman Arts Festival in the Cayman Islands, an incredibly beautiful place to perform.
Musical heroes: Julian Bream was always my reference for the kind of sound I wanted to create. Elsewhere, the bands that made me want to play the guitar when I was younger were Def Leppard and Scorpions (these were also the first live gigs I ever went to!).
Dream concert: Basically, anywhere warm – my hands are always cold! – with a great acoustic and, ideally, playing with an orchestra. Nothing beats this feeling!

TIMEPIECE This month in history

Cruise control: Handel meets King George I on the Thames; (right) George I (top) knew Handel (below) from his Hanover days

JULY 1717

Handel's *Water Music* floats a troubled monarch's boat

Exactly what triggered King George I's decision to mount a royal boat trip on the River Thames in the summer of 1717 is uncertain. Was it a desire to upstage his son, the Prince of Wales, a more charismatic and popular figure with whom he frequently argued? Or an attempt to bolster his social and constitutional standing at a period of considerable political unrest in the country? Perhaps he simply hankered for a pleasant evening on the river, accompanied by his two mistresses and assorted 'Persons of Quality'.

Whatever his precise motivation, on the evening of Wednesday 17 July a grand flotilla of boats assembled at Whitehall, headed by the King 'in an open barge'. Beside him, in another barge, was clustered an orchestra of some 50 musicians, tuned and ready to play. Presiding over them was the 32-year-old German composer George Frideric Handel, who for the previous five years had lived in England. A sequence of instrumental movements by Handel, later entitled the *Water Music*, was scheduled to provide the entertainment for the evening.

It was not the King's first encounter with Handel's music. Seven years previously Handel had briefly served as George's kapellmeister (director of music) at his electoral court in Hanover, and so the monarch's undiminished enthusiasm for his former employee's music made the composer a natural choice for the boat trip commission. In the event, Handel produced a total of 22 movements to be performed on the evening – 'the finest Symphonies', as a contemporary news report put it. Most of them are assumed to have been newly written by the composer, though some may have been recycled from earlier pieces, a regular practice.

To match the splendour of the occasion, Handel truly pushed the boat out in terms of orchestral colouring and spectacle. A pair of horns was included – a novelty at that period in England – and they ring out imperiously in several of the movements. Two trumpets were also present, adding their gleaming triumphal brightness to the mix. A dazzling sequence of dance movements – minuets, bourrées, riguadons, gigues – kept the energy levels high. And, as a cap-doff to his country of residence, Handel even slotted in a pair of perky English hornpipes.

Quite what order the 22 movements were played in is not recorded, though they were subsequently arranged into three key-related suites for publishing purposes. What we do know for certain is that King George was thoroughly enraptured by the music he was hearing, as the royal barge headed the three miles upstream on a rising tide to Chelsea. 'His Majesty's approval of it was so great that he caused it to be played three times in all,' wrote Friedrich Bonet, a contemporary observer, 'even though each performance lasted an hour'.

> 'His Majesty's approval of it was so great that he caused it to be played three times'

For the musicians, it was a long, long evening. The royal barge left Whitehall at 8pm, and two complete performances of the *Water Music* were given before the King disembarked for 'a choice supper' at Chelsea. Another run-through was demanded on the journey home, which began as late as two or three o'clock in the morning – 'the Musick continuing to play' until the King landed, as one newspaper reported.

The players were, it seems, decently remunerated for their efforts. £150 in total was spent on paying them, which is the equivalent of roughly £500 for each player in today's money. What Handel himself was paid for composing the *Water Music* is not known, although the PR value of such a high-profile and well attended occasion as a whole was undoubted. 'The evening was as fine as could be desired,' noted Bonet, 'and the number of barges and boats full of people wanting to listen was beyond counting.' ***Terry Blain***

GETTY, TITILAYO AYANGADE, NAT MICHELE

Trouble at sea: the Battle of Matapan rages

Also in July 1717...

1st: Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, is acquitted of high treason. Lord high treasurer during the rule of Queen Anne, Harley had been impeached by the House of Commons in 1715 for his role in negotiating the Treaty of Utrecht which, while bringing an end to the War of Spanish Succession, was condemned by many Whigs for being pro-French.

13th: The Italian composer **Domenico Zipoli** and a group of 53 Society of Jesus missionaries arrive in Buenos Aires in Spanish Colonial America. From there, Zipoli travels to Córdoba, where he completes his training as a priest and serves as music director in the local Jesuit church. His choral music soon spreads further afield, gaining popularity among the Chiquitos Indians in Bolivia.

15th: The **Indemnity Act 1717** is given royal assent. Also known as the Act of Grace and Free Pardon, it frees hundreds of prisoners incarcerated after the Jacobite rising of 1715 and allows them to settle either at home or abroad. Well-known figures benefitting from the Act include the Earl of Carnwath and Lord Nairne, though all members of the Clan MacGregor are specifically excluded.

19th: Venice's Armada Grossa and a fleet from Portugal, Malta and the Papal States are attacked by the Ottoman fleet at the **Battle of Matapan** off the south coast of Greece. Three hours of bloody fighting result in significant losses for both sides, including two Venetian ships and hundreds of lives, before the Turks eventually withdraw. The battle itself proves indecisive, however.

28th: Among various sweeping reforms aimed at encouraging industry and manufacture, **Frederick Wilhelm I of Prussia** orders that education is to be made compulsory for all children from ages five to 12. The king, whose other enlightened measures will include liberating the serfs on his own properties, reasons that no state can function efficiently if its people are illiterate.

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MEET THE COMPOSER

Lost in translation: 'I like singing in Japanese, because you have that layer of ambiguity'

Ben Nobuto

Three works to discover

Serenity 2.0 *(2021)*
Written for Manchester Collective's *Heavy Metal* tour, this RPS Award-winning work for string quartet and electronics is a sonic rollercoaster that takes the listener on a constantly interrupted meditation, its sounds and samples turning on a dime.

Sol *(2022)*
Based on fragments of overheard conversations, this Ivors Award-winning work is a playful celebration of sun gods for eight voices, commissioned by the National Youth Choir.

Break-Up Mantras *(2023)*
Premiered at Italy's Anghiari Festival and commissioned by the Southbank Sinfonia, this 'love song' for six players and electronics is dreamily euphoric.

Born in Japan but brought up in the UK, Ben Nobuto is an award-winning young composer with a thrillingly individual voice. His music defies categorisation, leaping across stylistic boundaries and creating exhilarating sonic juxtapositions. Nobuto's *Hallelujah Sim* receives its world premiere at the First Night of the Proms on 19 July.

I was always curious about music, but maybe slightly in denial. I remember my friends saw music as the doss subject at school and wouldn't take it seriously. But secretly I thought it was really enjoyable! At age 13 or 14 I was improvising a lot on the piano, but didn't know it was called composition.

At university I wrote a lot of music for myself to play on piano with electronic parts. That felt like a really intuitive way of making music, as it was all based in my body and what I know. I studied classical music, composition and the basics of theory, so I've had that grounding, but once you have that knowledge it's about being able to turn it into something that feels natural and authentic.

I was listening to a lot of Coltrane, free jazz and electronic producers. I had quite a segregated view of those things, like they were separate things that I wasn't allowed to mix. But gradually I let myself do whatever I wanted, and it felt more natural. It's like I was allowing myself to lean in to all those sides of me that I felt I had to surpress. It was a nice process to go through.

After finishing university, Manchester Collective offered me a commission out of the blue. I wrote a piece called *Serenity 2.0*, which is for string quartet, electronics and percussion. They took that on tour and it was quite a big thing for me; I felt like a composer then, but I still feel weird about calling myself a composer, because the word feels quite loaded.

A lot of my writing method is based around my fingers and what feels good. Sometimes it's nice to start off by improvising and lock into a groove that feels right, and then that's the basis for something you refine later. I prefer to go from moment to moment and ask myself, 'Is this interesting to listen to?' So it's a moment-to-moment feeling, deciding whether it's enjoyable to listen to, as if I was an audience member, not knowing anything about it but experiencing it on a purely sensory level.

I have this weird insecurity about the Japanese side of my identity, but it's interesting to use in music. Japanese words sound more like sound objects to me; I really like singing in Japanese, because you have that layer of ambiguity – you're saying something, but it's not clear what you're saying. Japanese Pop is an aesthetic I got interested in and lean into – that kind of sparkly, flashy, hyper-consumerist landscape of internet memes and saturation and the dazzling quality of it all.

Having my music in the First Night of the Proms is a bit surreal. They asked if I wanted to write a short-ish piece for the BBC Symphony Chorus and said I could add other elements, like electronics, percussion or strings if I wanted. I like the idea of applying structures from videogames or films, narrative ideas, onto the music. So in *Hallelujah Sim* there's a voice in the electronics part, sort of like a narrator, telling the chorus to do certain things, like stages of a videogame, and they can only progress through the piece once they've completed that task. There are different types of 'Hallelujah' and each one is like a different level in the game.

I've been working on my debut album for quite a while. It's a mix of lots of different instruments and electronics. I like the idea of applying a producer mentality to classical recordings, so if I can I'll try to record each person individually and then put it together in Logic, the way pop music is recorded, so you get a really clean, nice-sounding result.

MANCHESTER COLLECTIVE/PHIL SHARP

Music to my ears

Proms ahead: violinist Braimah Kanneh-Mason

The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites...

Charlotte Smith *Editor*
This year's Proms launch took place in the impressively renovated Royal College of Music. I was taken with my alma mater's new look – including a beautiful glass-fronted museum to house its once overlooked musical instrument collection. In the elegant, high-ceilinged Performance Hall we were treated to energetic, tango-infused performances from violinist **Braimah Kanneh-Mason**, guitarist **Plínio Fernandes** and members of the **Fantasia Orchestra** – due to appear in two Proms.

Jeremy Pound *Deputy editor*
Chabrier's *España* is always a good mood-lifter. And that feel-good factor only increases when it is followed by similarly sunny works by Debussy, Ravel and Ibert on John Wilson and the Sinfonia of London's 2020 *Escales* album of French orchestral classics. For me the highlight, however, is **Duruflé**'s *Trois Danses*, Op. 6, a veritable flurry of Gallic colour with a spledidly sensuous saxophone solo in 'Tambourin'.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*
I hoofed it along to the Royal Windsor Horse Show where, for the first time, they had a 'Performance Hub'. In a marquee in the shadow of Windsor Castle, we enjoyed music by **Debbie Wiseman** – the composer on piano, with eloquent string support by cellist Justin Pearson and violinist Sam Staples, words by Alan Titchmarsh, and the premiere of a new song performed by soprano Grace Davidson. A treat.

Steve Wright *Content producer*
I'm just back from a press trip to Ostrava, Czech Republic, where I was treated to a superb performance of **Smetana**'s *The Bartered Bride* – joyous, witty, and stuffed with rustic Bohemian flavour. There were some great comic turns, memorably from Martin Gurbal' as the pompous matchmaker, Kecal. The folk dances call to mind those delicious furiants from Dvořák's symphonic scherzos, and Smetana's music bubbles over with melody, invention and energy.

REWIND

Great artists talk about their past recordings

BARBARA HANNIGAN *Soprano and conductor*

MY FINEST MOMENT
La Passione
LUDWIG Orchestra/Barbara Hannigan (soprano) *Alpha Classics ALPHA586 (2020)*

La Passione was truly a collaborative effort and is particularly special to me. I chose three works which were linked by themes of loss, grief and rebirth:

Nono's *Djamila Boupacha* for solo voice, Haydn's Symphony No. 49 and Grisey's *Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil*. Each work makes intense demands both technically and emotionally; everyone has to dig deep. The Grisey is perhaps one of the most heartbreaking and powerful works I have ever encountered, a journey through death and beyond. And the Nono stretches the soaring vocal line from oppression towards hope.

I was surrounded by a trusted team with whom I had worked for years, beginning with the musicians of the Dutch collective LUDWIG. We recorded the album in Holland at the end of several months of intense touring – we were a tight-knit group by then and working together was joyful. This was my third album with Alpha Classics, who have supported and understood my repertoire combinations and choices. Recording engineer Guido Tichelman was at my side not only for the recording, but travelled to my home, where we spent days editing and

Close partners: Barbara Hannigan performs Satie with Reinbert de Leeuw

mixing the album. We've been friends and colleagues for over two decades and the ease and joy with which we work is precious to me. The cover image was from an unforgettable underwater photo shoot I did with Elmer de Haas.

MY FONDEST MEMORY

Satie *Socrate*

Barbara Hannigan (soprano), Reinbert de Leeuw (piano) *Winter & Winter 9102342 (2015)*

Whenever I think of Reinbert de Leeuw, the pianist, conductor, composer and champion of contemporary music, I think of space and time, because his feeling for both is unlike anything I've ever encountered. He has been a mentor and friend to me, and I still feel his presence strongly. This recording created a beautiful, delicate world and I think it helped me to find a very delicate vocal sound in the recording studio which I had not explored before.

I had been working with Reinbert since 1999, but finally in 2015 we recorded our first album together for voice and piano, with very early songs of Satie combined with his last major work, *Socrate*. The album was planned quickly, at the moment when Reinbert's health began to fail (he passed away in early 2020), and we knew we only had limited years left to work together.

Sometimes during the sessions I had to pinch myself, flooded with memories of listening to Reinbert's famous Satie records when I was a student in Canada, with no clue that he and I would become such close musical partners. Photographer Elmer de Haas captured probably my all-time favourite album cover with this shot through a window during a break – of Reinbert smoking his usual hand-rolled shag cigarette, with me in the background.

I'D LIKE ANOTHER GO AT...

Berg *Lulu*

Barbara Hannigan (soprano) et al; Orchestre symphonique de la Monnaie/ Paul Daniel *Bel Air Classiques BAC109 (2014)*

Don't get me wrong, I have a lot of wonderful memories of this recording. It was the first time I'd worked with director Krzysztof Warlikowski, and more than ten years later my feet are still recovering from being on pointe shoes for more than half the opera (but would I do it again? Oh yeah.) He and I have gone on to do another three operas together, plus two stagings of *Socrate*

with Reinbert de Leeuw. My first *Lulu* happened during a decade when I had the fortune to be a part of several powerful operatic productions (*Written on Skin*, *Die Soldaten*, *Matsukaze*, *Hamlet* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*). I was on a constant learning curve and every director I was working with opened up new possibilities.

As everyone who has sung Lulu knows, she does not let you go easily. I sang my most recent performances in 2021, and I don't expect to sing her again (never say never). The next time I will rekindle this love affair will be from the podium in the pit. I can't wait.

Hannigan's new Messiaen album (Alpha Classics) is reviewed on p83

ELMER DE HAAS, GETTY, MARCO BORGGREVE, ROY COX, JOHN DAVIS

Perfect poise: American gymnast Simone Biles

My Hero

Conductor ***Gemma New*** salutes the focus, positivity and grace under pressure of artistic gymnast ***Simone Biles***

It is an impossible task for me to choose just one of my many heroes from our musical community. Thus, and especially given it being an Olympic year, I am taking this opportunity to highlight a heroine in a sport from which musicians can draw many parallels.

As with musicians, for artistic gymnasts the ratio between preparation and performance falls heavily in favour of the former. When the intense moment of performance finally comes, gymnasts and musicians both need to find a mental calm, inner breath and focused mind. They need to muster confidence, posture, balance, strength and poise, as the timing and intent of their movements need to be absolutely perfectly on point. Listening to their body, sensitivity, awareness and concentration are all paramount.

As with conductors, while constantly working with others, a gymnast's path is a uniquely individual one. They need to be open to self-criticism if they are to grow in their careers. It is for all these reasons that I find gymnastics an incredibly inspiring sport. At the Paris Olympics I will be cheering for Simone Biles, who time and time again has excelled in all of the above. Beyond that, as a leader in her field she has instilled a positive, warm, fun, supportive working atmosphere for her colleagues. It reminds me of the healthy working environment we aim to encourage onstage as conductors.

Bravo, Simone – and the best of luck for the Paris Olympics!

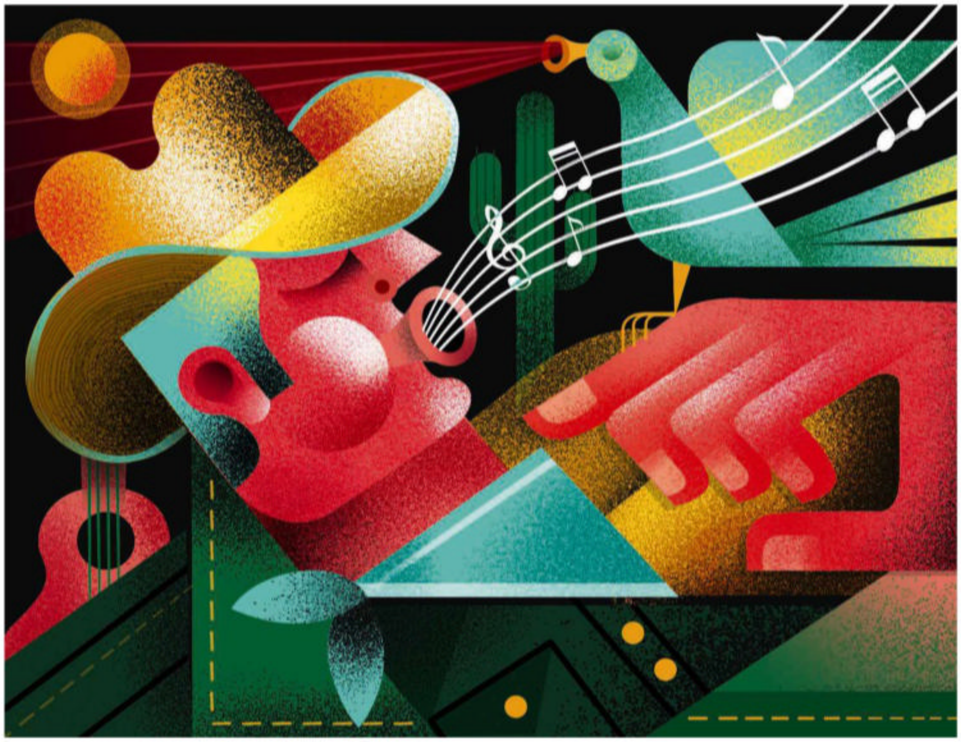
Gemma New conducts music by Mozart, Mendelssohn and Mel Bonis at the BBC Proms (Prom 36, Fri 16 Aug).

THE LISTENING SERVICE

Whistle that tune...

According to Sondheim *Anyone Can Whistle*, but this precious musical skill – integral to all of us – is endangered in the modern world, says **Tom Service**

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN



It's the instrument that we all carry around with us throughout our lives. It's more reliable and constant than our changing voices, a sound we can make as efficiently as children as we can when we're nonagenarians, and it used to be a ubiquitous accompaniment to our routines, a cheery self-made soundtrack while we worked and when we played: the joyful sound of whistling.

And yet whistling is now endangered – and not only because in our private worlds of personal audio, on phones and laptops, we have access to the music of our entire species at the click of a button, so we don't need to purse our lips to make any tune we might want to hear.

It's also because whistling as a linguistic phenomenon is under threat. The whistling languages of communities from Papua New Guinea to the Amazon, from the Canary Islands to France and Morocco, are under threat, thanks to a predictable combination of urbanisation and a loss of cultural memory. These astounding languages – fully semantic, but made of seemingly musical, non-verbal sound – use the acoustic power of whistling to travel distances that speech can't, allowing communication across valleys and mountaintops: there's no need to walk over to the next village if you can whistle them instead.

They are also a treasure trove for linguists and neuroscientists, because whistling makes language systems that light up parts of the brain that our speech on its own doesn't. There are records of them going back to Ancient Greece and China, and the preservation of these whistling languages is a now matter of some urgency, because they are a unique part of the history and richness of how we communicate through sound as a species.

Whistling is threatened as a linguistic phenomenon by a loss of cultural memory

Someone who is bringing back whistling to culture is the professional whistler Molly Lewis, who was inspired to take up her career when she watched a documentary – called *Pucker Up* – on the Louisburg International Whistlers Convention which, sadly, had its last edition in 2013. Molly is now a whistler who uses her gifts to find an expressive world that only whistling can conjure on her albums and in her performances. Her music is an ethereal throw-back to a world of loungey, laid-back melancholy. The reverberating halo of her whistling is the sound of a new-minted nostalgia, with resonances of the era of the most famous recorded whistles of all, when Alessandro Alessandroni gave Ennio Morricone's soundtrack for *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* its signature sound of disturbing wistfulness, captured in his unforgettable whistle across the desert.

Today, Molly Lewis's albums sound out a musical place where you just want to join her; and return to the world in which we make our own soundtracks to our lives, thanks to the certainty that anyone can whistle – and we should!

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Tom Service plays the best music to start your weekend in *Saturday Morning* at 9am

Multi-faceted: saxophonist David Sanborn

David Sanborn Born 1945 *Saxophonist*

The winner of six Grammy awards, David Sanborn excelled as both a jazz and pop saxophonist, who over a 65-year career performed and recorded with the likes of BB King, David Bowie and Stevie Wonder, among many others. His solo discs, including *Taking Off* (1975) and *Voyeur* (1981) saw him spend many weeks in the US Billboard charts, while his playing – of both the alto saxophone and the horn – can also be heard on well-known albums such as Bruce Springsteen's *Born to Run*, Bowie's *Young Americans* and Oleta Adams's *Evolution*. Born in Tampa, Florida, Sanborn took up the saxophone as a boy when a doctor suggested it to build up his chest muscles which had been weakened by polio. At just 14, he began a performing career that would see him work with the likes of The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, the Brecker Brothers and singer/songwriter Al Jarreau. He also hosted jazz-related programmes on radio and TV.

Jerrold Northrop Moore Born 1934 *Elgar scholar*

Published in 1984, Jerrold Northrop Moore's *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* is considered a definitive biography, its creation aided by the author's personal close ties with Elgar's family and friends. Moore wrote several other guides to Elgar, plus authoritative books about subjects including Vaughan Williams, conductor Adrian Boult and the history of the gramophone. Born in New Jersey, US, Moore first visited England in 1954, when a meeting with Elgar's daughter Clarice proved the spark for his research into the composer. In 1970, he moved permanently to Britain, making his home in the Cotswolds. As well as giving regular lectures on British music, he wrote for a number of publications, including for *BBC Music Magazine*'s 150th-anniversary celebration of Elgar in 2007.

Jan AP Kaczmarek Born 1953 *Composer*

Before music called, the Academy Award-winning Polish composer almost had a very different career. Trained in law, Jan Kaczmarek originally imagined himself as a diplomat, but the 1970s saw him embrace experimental music-making, as both composer and performer. He wrote music for theatre in Poznan and founded the Orchestra of the Eighth Day, earning critical and popular acclaim. The US stage beckoned in the late 1980s, with stints writing for theatre companies in Los Angeles and Chicago, and by the mid-'90s film became his creative arena – he would go on to write over 50 scores for film and TV. He won a 2004 Oscar for his score for *Finding Neverland*.

GETTY

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Pick a theme... and name your seven favourite examples

Glyndebourne's music director Robin Ticciati enthuses about the finest depictions of love in opera

Born in London, Robin Ticciati trained as a violinist, pianist and percussionist before taking up conducting aged 15 under the guidance of Sir Colin Davis and Sir Simon Rattle. Awarded an OBE in 2019, he marks his tenth anniversary as Glyndebourne's music director in 2024. There, he leads a new production of Bizet's *Carmen* this summer, and on 29 July will conduct Nikolaus Lehnhoff's production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Richard Wagner
***Tristan und Isolde* – Act II**

Like the changing of seasons, my operatic preferences are constantly in motion. Today, soon after the birth of my daughter, these are some portrayals of love that spring to mind... Wagner's writing in *Tristan und Isolde* is intoxicating, but it was only when I conducted it at Glyndebourne that it began to course through my veins. What strikes me is the balance between the world of carnal passion and the ephemeral world of the numinous. The Schopenhauer-inspired philosophy of their love is played out in Act II – only realised in death.

Hector Berlioz
***Roméo et Juliette* – 'Scène d'amour'**

My first memories of Berlioz go back to lessons with Colin Davis when I was 13. He read me passages of Shakespeare, and spoke to me about how to 'set up' a piece. Berlioz's music is all in the imagination. His feelings were almost too much for an interpreter to capture! In *Roméo et Juliette*'s love scene is a heart-breaking duet for cor anglais and flute – for Berlioz an instrument of innocence, the church, his father... The melody captures love in its purest form and foreshadows great loss.

BEN EALOVEGA, GETTY

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
***Le nozze di Figaro* – Act IV finale**

So often the striking moments in opera are made manifest by the dialogue between conductor, director and singer – what goes on between the Count and the Countess at the end? How pure? How broken? How cynical? On days when I need comforting, or when life seems to be rolling well, I believe that the countess's 'yes' is a 'yes'. All is forgiven. Mozart seems to offer us in his music the possibility of what we could be as humans; a utopian world filled with love.

Francis Poulenc
***Dialogues des Carmélites* – 'Salve regina'**

Working with Barrie Kosky on the *Carmélites* in 2023 showed me how a director can push singers to their limits and find a clarity on stage that hits the audience in the solar plexus. The final scene, 'Salve Regina', is an example of extreme love in faith: searing strings, the inescapable thud of the basses and the shock of the unexpected guillotine, culminating in a moment of stillness when Soeur Constance holds the hand of Blanche and goes to her death. When conducting this music I can't but help, in that moment, to believe.

Richard Strauss
***Der Rosenkavalier* – Final Trio**

On its own, the trio in *Rosenkavalier's* Act III is beautiful music, but in context the complex relationship between the Marschallin, Octavian and Sophie really presents itself. It is the love of letting go, of detachment, of guilt, of the new shoots of hope. Through it, Strauss spins together heavenly lines, culminating in one of the greatest climaxes in all music. Octavian and Sophie are left to themselves as Strauss returns to the simplicity of a classical dance tinged with *fin de siècle* harmony.

Antonín Dvořák
***Rusalka* – 'Líbej mne, líbej, mír mi přej'**

The first time I conducted *Rusalka*, I met my wife. At my core I am a romantic, but what a balance it is (in music) to find true pathos and not leak all too easily into kitsch. With our cast and LPO in the pit at Glyndebourne, I will always have in my heart the Prince's words in Act III, 'Kiss me, so I may die' – a sentiment rising from the lowest part of the tenor tessitura and soaring to a top A. I'm thankful that art can open up worlds of such emotional depth, however sad or traumatic.

Claude Debussy
***Pelléas et Mélisande* – 'C'est le dernier soir'**

The more I travel through opera, the more I analyse the hierarchy between text, melody, harmony and orchestration. In Debussy the play is the thing: the rhythm of text, punctuation and speed are integral to the drama. In Act IV, Mélisande confesses to Pelléas that she has loved him from the first moment... their kiss is immediately interrupted by Goloud. Debussy gives us a smallest glimpse of a cosmic, supernatural love and then cuts it down. The music curdles, twists, screams... it turns bloody so quickly. A miracle in dramatic pacing.

All you need is love: Robin Ticciati picks his favourite moments of operatic passion; (opposite) Mannes Opera's *Dialogues des Carmélites*; and Peter Seiffert and Nina Stemme as Tristan and Isolde

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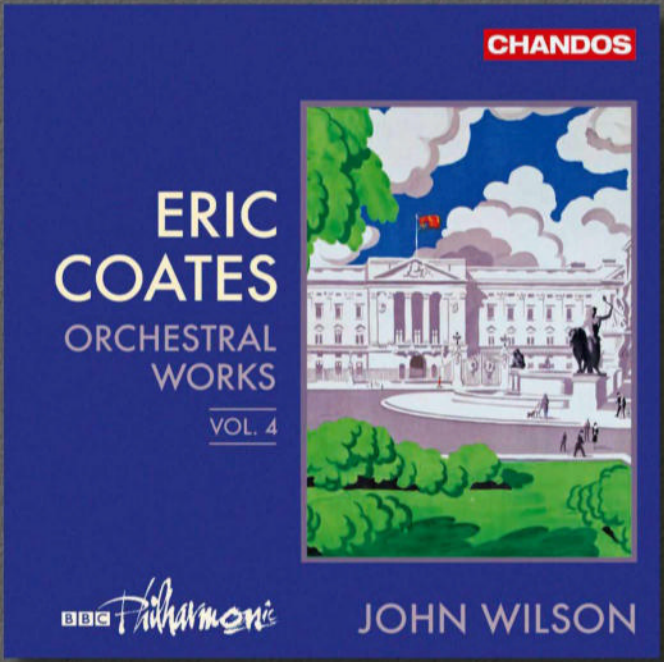

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

ERIC COATES
Orchestral Works, Vol. 4

BBC Philharmonic | John Wilson

John Wilson's survey of the music of Eric Coates continues with this album featuring the orchestral suites *Four Centuries* and *From Meadow to Mayfair*, alongside *The Three Bears* Phantasy. *Under the Stars*, *I Sing to You*, *Footlights*, and *Music Everywhere* complete the programme.

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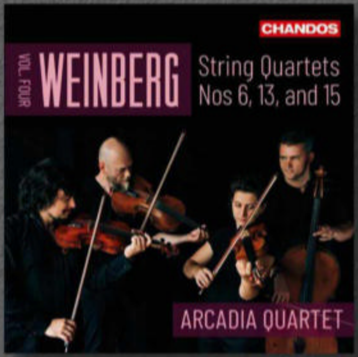
ROOTED

Neave Trio

The Neave Trio's latest album presents a programme of works variously inspired by folk music. Trios by Bedřich Smetana and Josef Suk carry strong Bohemian resonances, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor explores his African heritage, whilst Frank Martin bases his Trio on Irish folk melodies.



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WEINBERG

STRING QUARTETS, VOL. 4

Arcadia Quartet

The Arcadia Quartet's acclaimed survey of Weinberg's string quartets continues with this fourth volume containing Quartets Nos 6, 13, and 15. The sixth quartet was banned by the Soviet authorities, leading to a break of over a decade before Weinberg returned to the genre.

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Neeme Järvi

Neeme Järvi leads his Estonian forces in this vibrant celebration of nineteenth-century French opera overtures. Music by Daniel Auber and Jean Planquette is coupled with a suite from Alexandre Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot*, in Gordon Jacob's arrangement for Léonide Massine's ballet *Mam'zelle Angot*, which closely follows the action of the opera.

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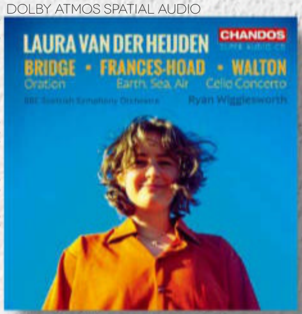

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Richard Morrison

I've attended the Proms for 60 years – here are ten memorable moments

It's 60 years since I attended my first BBC Prom. I was, I hasten to add, barely a toddler at the time. And since then? Probably 40 every year since my teens, so around 2,000 concerts in all. I'm not claiming a record. Some dedicated prommers must be way ahead of my tally. But my 60th anniversary does prompt me to ponder which of those 2,000 evenings have been most memorable. I don't mean the best musically, though many have been that too. I mean the ones that live vividly in my memory, even though a lifetime and several marriages have slipped by...

Last Night, 1967
Incredibly, my first Last Night (I was treated to a ticket by a rich aunt) was Malcolm Sargent's last. Ravaged by cancer, he hadn't conducted all season, but he suddenly appeared, pumped full of painkillers, to give a speech. Opinions of Sargent differ, but he dominated the Proms for years and was greeted with a tremendous roar. He announced he would reappear for the 1968 season. Everyone, including him, knew he wouldn't. He died two weeks later.

Rostropovich's Dvořák, 1968
Soviet tanks had rolled into Prague on the very day I saw Mstislav Rostropovich, the dissident Russian cellist, at the Proms playing Czech music – Dvořák's Cello Concerto – with a Russian orchestra. He delivered a heart-breaking performance, then held up the composer's score as a sign of where his sympathies lay. Brave and moving.

Max walkout, 1969
Everyone remembers how angry viewers jammed the BBC switchboard in 1995 when Harrison Birtwistle's *Panic* was played at the Last Night. But I witnessed just as big a rumpus 26 years earlier when Peter Maxwell Davies's *Worldes Blis* caused a noisy walkout by hundreds of people. Doesn't happen these days. Is that because the Proms audiences have got more polite, or the music has?

Bernstein's Mahler, 1987
Astonishingly, Leonard Bernstein – a man who revelled in being the centre of vast occasions – never conducted at the Proms until three years before he died. When he did appear, with the Vienna Phil in Mahler Five, the atmosphere was electrifying. His personality infused the players, the audience, the very hall itself.

> Alone in the darkness, Yo-Yo Ma performed 150 minutes of Bach almost without a break

Rattle rattled, 1998
Simon Rattle has had many Proms triumphs, but he was decidedly annoyed – and we in the audience decidedly startled – when someone set off an alarm and showered the audience with leaflets during a piece by Oliver Knussen. The leaflets spoke of a 'cabal' controlling who got Proms premieres. The perpetrator was alleged to be a disgruntled composer. Rattle responded by conducting the Knussen again.

Barenboim's peace orchestra, 2003
Founded by the idealistic Daniel Barenboim to bring together young Israelis and Arabs, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra first appeared at the Proms in 2003. The atmosphere was incredible: such hope, joy and, not least, impassioned music-making. How tragic that the Middle East's politicians haven't followed where its musicians led.

Abbado's Mahler, 2007
A universe away from Bernstein, Claudio Abbado, by then looking desperately thin and ill, conducted a transcendental performance of Mahler's Third Symphony with his hand-picked Lucerne Festival Orchestra. It felt like a celebration of love and life by a man whose time was running out.

Arrival of the Bolívars, 2007
For their encore alone – the 'Mambo' from Bernstein's *West Side Story,* danced as much as played in an explosion of red, blue and yellow jackets – Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar National Youth Orchestra will go down in Proms history. For those in the hall it seemed, briefly, as if the symphony orchestra had been reinvented.

Yo-Yo's Bach, 2015
Alone in the darkness, Yo-Yo Ma performed the 150 minutes of Bach's Six Cello Suites almost without break, entirely from memory and with a grace, suppleness, delicacy and natural lyricism that transfixed a vast crowd. It was the finest solo performance I've ever heard at the Proms.

Aurora's *Rite of Spring*, 2023
Even by the Aurora Orchestra's feats of memory, this extraordinary dramatised version of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* was astonishing. Under Nicholas Collon's direction, the players inhabited the violent, complex score so thoroughly that the music seemed to flash like electric shocks from their very bones and sinews. Six decades on from my first Prom, I was like a small child again: dazzled and awestruck.

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

WELCOME TO THE PROMS

It's time again for a sensational summer of music! Explore the world's greatest classical music festival with our complete guide to the 2024 programme

Details of Proms to be broadcast on BBC TV, either live or later in the season, are included below. All Proms will also be broadcast on BBC Radio 3, many of them live; check schedules for details. For detailed ticket prices and booking fees, visit bbc.co.uk/promstickets
Note: booking fee is not included in ticket prices.

FRIDAY 19 JULY

PROM 1
Live on BBC Two
6.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15-£64
First Night of the Proms 2024
Handel *Music for the Royal Fireworks: Overture* **Bruckner** *Psalm 150* **Clara Schumann** *Piano Concerto* **Ben Nobuto** *Hallelujah Sim* (world premiere) **Beethoven** *Symphony No. 5*. Sophie Bevan (sop), Isata Kanneh-Mason (pf); BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus & Orchestra/Elim Chan

SATURDAY 20 JULY

PROM 2
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Two
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15-£64
Everybody Dance! The Sound of Disco
BBC Concert Orchestra/Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser

SUNDAY 21 JULY

PROM 3
11am Royal Albert Hall
£11-£54
Programme to include **Bob Chilcott** *High Flight* **Melissa Dunphy** *Totality* **Ēriks Ešenvalds** *Stars* **Holst** *The Evening Watch* **Van Heusen/B. Howard, arr. A L'Estrange** *Come Fly With Me*. The King's Singers, VOCES8

PROM 4
Live on BBC Four
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11-£54
James MacMillan *Timotheus, Bacchus and Cecilia* **Mahler** *Symphony No. 5*. Hallé Children's Choir, Youth Choir & Choir, Hallé/Sir Mark Elder

MONDAY 22 JULY

PROM 5
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10-£44
Schoenberg *Pelleas and Melisande* **Zemlinsky** *The Mermaid*. BBC National Orch of Wales/Ryan Bancroft

TUESDAY 23 JULY

PROM 6
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Four
7pm Royal Albert Hall *£15-£64*
Verdi *Requiem*. Latonia Moore (sop), Karen Cargill (mez), SeokJong Baek (ten), Solomon Howard (bass); BBC National Chorus of Wales, Crouch End Festival Chorus, BBC National Orch of Wales/Ryan Bancroft

PROM 7
10.15pm Royal Albert Hall
£10-£28
Programme to include **Caccini** *Le nuove musiche – 'Amarilli, mia bella'* **Cavalli** *Pompeo Magno – 'Incomprensibil nume'* **Frescobaldi** *Arie musicali, Book I – 'Così mi disprezzate'* **Monteverdi** *L'incoronazione di Poppea – 'E pur io torno qui', plus vocal and instrumental works by* **Jarzębski**, **Kerll**, **Marini**, **Netti**, **Pallavicino** and **Sartorio**. Jakub Józef Orliński (countertenor); Il Pomo d'Oro

WEDNESDAY 24 JULY

PROM 8
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Nick Drake: An Orchestral Celebration. BBC Symphony Orchestra/Jules Buckley

THURSDAY 25 JULY

PROM 9
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Brahms *Symphony No. 3* **Schoenberg** *Verklärte Nacht* **Mahler** *Kindertotenlieder*. Alice Coote (mez); BBC Scottish Symphony/Ryan Wigglesworth

FRIDAY 26 JULY

PROM 10
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Britten *Gloriana – symphonic suite* **Cheryl Frances-Hoad** *Cello Concerto, 'Earth, Sea, Air'* **Elgar** *Symphony No. 2*. Laura van der Heijden (cello); BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ryan Wigglesworth

SATURDAY 27 JULY

PROM 11
Recorded for broadcast on CBeebies
11am Royal Albert Hall
£10-£27
CBeebies Prom: Wildlife Jamboree. Featuring Andy Day *(Andy's Adventures)*, Dodge T. Dog *(CBeebies House)*, Ashley Joseph *(Jojo & Gran Gran)*, Maddie Moate *(Do You Know?)*, Puja Panchkoty *(Andy's Adventures)*, Rhys Stephenson *(CBeebies House)*; BBC Singers, CBeebies East London Schools'

GETTY

All rise for the First Night: Elim Chan opens the Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra

Choir, Southbank Sinfonia/ Kwamé Ryan

PROM 12
3pm Royal Albert Hall
£10-£27
See Prom 11.

SUNDAY 28 JULY

PROM 13
Live on BBC Four
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Sarah Vaughan: If You Could See Me Now
BBC Concert Orch/Guy Barker

MONDAY 29 JULY

PROM 14
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Erkki-Sven Tüür *Aditus* **Beethoven** *Piano Concerto No. 5, 'Emperor'* **Bruckner** *Symphony No. 1 (1877 Linz version)*. Yunchan Lim (piano), BBC Symphony Orch/Paavo Järvi

TUESDAY 30 JULY

PROM 15
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Four
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Anna Clyne *The Gorgeous Nothings (world premiere)* **Messiaen** *Turangalîla Symph.* The Swingles, Steven Osborne (pf), Cynthia Millar (ondes Martenot); BBC Phil/Collon

WEDNESDAY 31 JULY

PROM 16
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Cassandra Miller *I cannot love without trembling (Viola Concerto)* **Shostakovich** *Symphony No. 4*. Lawrence Power (viola); BBC Philharmonic/ John Storgårds

THURSDAY 1 AUGUST

PROM 17
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Ives *Three Places in New England* **Ravel** *Piano Concerto in G major* **Debussy** *Nocturnes* **Tchaikovsky** *Francesca da Rimini*. Denis Kozhukhin (piano); Royal Philharmonic Orchestra & Chorus/Vasily Petrenko

FRIDAY 2 AUGUST

PROM 18
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Two
8pm Royal Albert Hall
£26–£80
Sam Smith: In the Lonely Hour
Sam Smith; BBC Concert Orchestra/Simon Hale

SATURDAY 3 AUGUST

PROM 19
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Harvey *Tranquil Abiding* **Elgar** *Cello Concerto* **Holst** *The Cloud Messenger*. Jess Dandy (contralto), Senja Rummukainen (cello); BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo

SUNDAY 4 AUGUST

PROM 20
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Four
11am Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Programme to include:
Bacharach *I Say a Little Prayer* **Bartók** *Romanian Folk Dances* **Brahms** *Hungarian Dances – Nos. 1, 2 & 5* **Marley** *Redemption Song* **Laura Mvula** *Sing to the Moon* **Trad.** *Scarborough Fair*. Braimah Kanneh-Mason (violin), Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello), Plínio Fernandes (guitar); Fantasia Orchestra/Tom Fetherstonhaugh

PROM 21
Live on BBC Four
7pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Wynton Marsalis *Herald, Holler and Hallelujah! (UK premiere)* **Copland** *Billy the Kid – suite* **Barber** *Adagio for strings* **Gershwin** *Rhapsody in Blue* **Ives** *The Unanswered Question* **John Adams** *Harmonielehre*. Steven Osborne (piano); Sinfonia of London/John Wilson

MONDAY 5 AUGUST

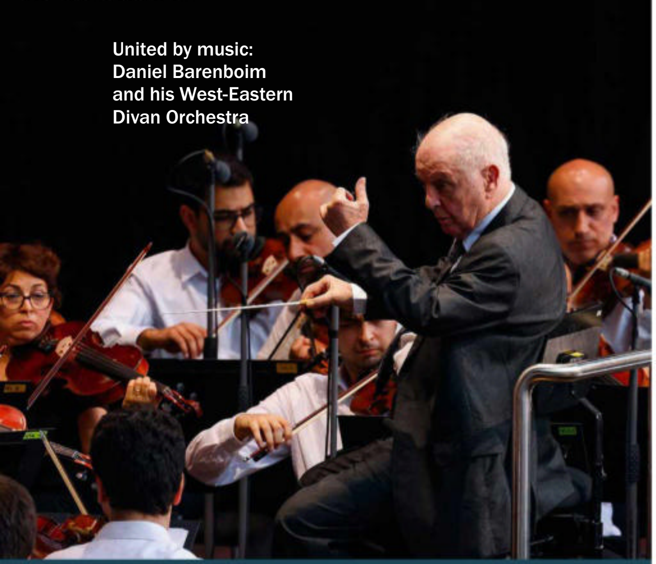
PROM 22 (Relaxed Prom)
11.15am Royal Albert Hall
£10–£27
Selected works from Prom 20
Braimah Kanneh-Mason (violin), Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello), Plínio Fernandes (guitar), Jess Gillam (presenter); Fantasia Orchestra/Tom Fetherstonhaugh

PROM 23
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Rachmaninov *Symphonic Dances* **Busoni** *Piano Concerto*. Benjamin Grosvenor (piano); Rodolfus Choir, London Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra/ Edward Gardner

TUESDAY 6 AUGUST

PROM 24
7pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Purcell *The Fairy Queen (semi-staged; sung and spoken in English)*. Paulina Francisco (soprano), Georgia Burashko (mezzo-soprano), Rebecca Leggett (mezzo-soprano), Juliette Mey (mezzo-soprano), Rodrigo Carreto (tenor), Ilja Aksionov (tenor), Hugo Herman-Wilson (baritone), Benjamin Schilperoort (bass-baritone); Compagnie Käfig, Les Arts Florissants/Paul Agnew/dir. Mourad Merzouki

BBC Proms



United by music: Daniel Barenboim and his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

Sax in the city: Jess Gillam performs Karl Jenkins's *Stravaganza*

OUR PROMS PICKS

Prom 31 *Sunday 11 August*

West-Eastern Divan Orch and Anne-Sophie Mutter

When Daniel Barenboim launched his ground-breaking West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in 1999 to bring together young Arab and Israeli musicians, he could hardly have anticipated that this experiment in intercultural dialogue would have such timely significance a quarter of a century later.

The ensemble brings its harmonic vision to the Proms 2024 with performances of Brahms's Violin Concerto – featuring the wonderful Anne-Sophie Mutter – and Schubert's 'Great' Symphony No 9, in what promises to be an evening of glorious music and sober reflection, conducted by Barenboim himself. *Charlotte Smith* Editor

WEDNESDAY 7 AUGUST

PROM 25
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
R Schumann *Genoveva – overture* **Sibelius** *Pohjola's Daughter* **Hans Abrahamsen** *Horn Concerto (UK premiere)* **Tchaikovsky** *Symphony No. 4*. Stefan Dohr (horn), BBC Philharmonic/John Storgårds

THURSDAY 8 AUGUST

PROM 26
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Beethoven *Violin Concerto* **Sarah Gibson** *beyond the beyond (world premiere)* **Brahms** *Symphony No. 4*. Tobias Feldmann (violin); BBC Philharmonic/Anja Bihlmaier

FRIDAY 9 AUGUST

PROM 27
6pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Saariaho *Mirage* **Mozart** *Piano Concerto No. 9, 'Jeunehomme'* **Strauss** *An Alpine Symphony*. Silja Aalto (soprano), Anssi Karttunen (cello), Seong-Jin Cho (piano); BBC Symphony Orchestra/Sakari Oramo

PROM 28
10.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£28
Heiner Goebbels *Songs of Wars I Have Seen*. London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Chloe Rooke

SATURDAY 10 AUGUST

PROM 29
11am Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Wagner *Tannhäuser – overture* **JS Bach** *Fantasia and Fugue, BWV 542* **Chaminade** *Six Concert Études, Op. 35 – Autumn* **Grison** *Toccata in F major* **Ives** *Variations on 'America'* **Tchaikovsky** *1812 Overture*. Jonathan Scott (organ)

PROM 30
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Four
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Wagner *The Flying Dutchman – overture* **Missy Mazzoli** *Orpheus Undone* **Dani Howard** *new work (world premiere)* **Mahler** *Symphony No. 1*. Musicians from NYO Inspire, The National Youth Orchestra/Nathalie Stutzmann

SUNDAY 11 AUGUST

PROM 31
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Four
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£26–£80
Brahms *Violin Concerto* **Schubert** *Symphony No. 9, 'Great'*. Anne-Sophie Mutter (violin), West-Eastern Divan Orchestra/Daniel Barenboim

MONDAY 12 AUGUST

PROM 32
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Grace Williams *Concert Overture* **Karl Jenkins** *Stravaganza* **Farrenc** *Overture No. 1* **Beethoven** *Symphony No. 7*. Jess Gillam (soprano saxophone), BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Nil Venditti

TUESDAY 13 AUGUST

PROM 33
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Elgar *Overture 'Cockaigne'* **Holst** *Hammersmith* **Stanford** *Songs of Faith – 'To the Soul'; 'Tears'; 'Joy, shipmate, joy!'; 'The Fairy Lough'* **Vaughan Williams** *A London Symphony*. Christopher Maltman (baritone); BBC Symphony Orchestra/Martyn Brabbins

WEDNESDAY 14 AUGUST

PROM 34
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Reel Change: Soundtracks at the Cutting Edge Including: **Volker Bertelmann** *All Quiet on the Western Front* **The Echo Society** *Postcard from Earth* **Hildur Guðnadóttir** *Tár* **Anna Meredith** *The End We Start From* **Son Lux** *Everything Everywhere All at Once* **Colin Stetson** *The Menu* **Tamar-kali** *Shirley*. London Contemporary Orchestra/Robert Ames

THURSDAY 15 AUGUST

PROM 35
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Ellington *Solitude; Mood Indigo; Sophisticated Lady; Caravan* **Mary Lou Williams** *Zodiac Suite (European premiere)* **Anthony Braxton** *Composition No. 27 (+46, 151, LM)*. Anthony Braxton (saxophone), James Fei (saxophone/conductor), Katherine Young (bassoon/conductor); Aaron Diehl Trio, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ilan Volkov

FRIDAY 16 AUGUST

PROM 36
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Bonis *Salomé* **Mozart** *Clarinet Concerto in A major* **Mendelssohn** *A Midsummer Night's Dream – incidental music*. Anthony McGill (clarinet); NYCOS Chamber Choir, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Gemma New

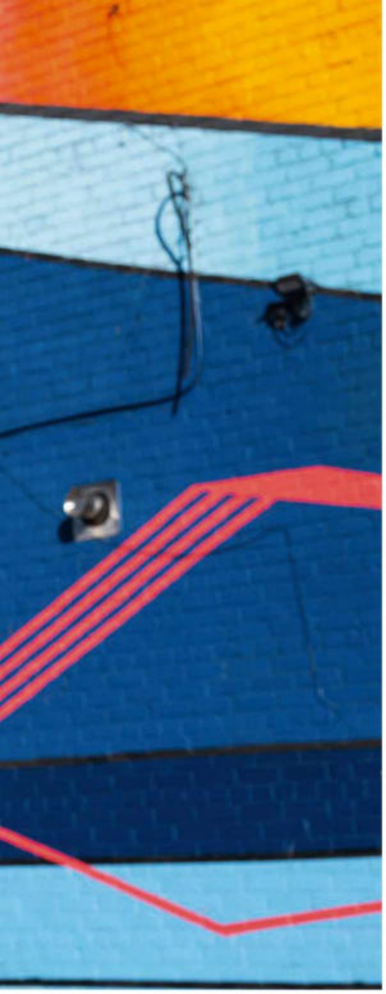
SATURDAY 17 AUGUST

PROM 37
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Four
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Britten *War Requiem*. Natalya Romaniw (soprano), Allan Clayton (tenor), Will Liverman (baritone); Tiffin Boys' Choir, BBC Symphony Chorus, London Symphony Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra/Sir Antonio Pappano

SUNDAY 18 AUGUST

PROM 38
11am Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Dukas *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* **Francisco Coll** *Cello Concerto (UK premiere)*, **Puccini** *Preludio sinfonico* **Stravinsky** *The Firebird – suite (1945 version)*. Sol Gabetta (vc); BBC

GETTY, ROBIN CLEWLEY



Symphony Orchestra/Tianyi Lu

PROM 39
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11-£54
Busoni *Comedy Overture* **Beethoven** *Piano Concerto No. 4* **A Coleridge-Taylor** *A Sussex Landscape* **Dvořák** *Symphony No. 7.* Francesco Piemontesi (piano); Ulster Orchestra/ Daniele Rustioni

MONDAY 19 AUGUST

PROM 40
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
JS Bach *St John Passion.* Benjamin Bruns (Evangelist), Christian Immler (Jesus), Yusuke Watanabe (Pilate); Bach Collegium Japan/ Masaaki Suzuki

TUESDAY 20 AUGUST

PROM 41
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Mozart *The Marriage of Figaro – overture; Sinfonia concertante; Don Giovanni – overture; Symphony No. 41, 'Jupiter'.* Clara-Jumi Kang (violin), Timothy Ridout (viola); Ensemble Resonanz/Riccardo Minasi

WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST

PROM 42
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Beethoven's Ninth by Heart
A musical and dramatic exploration of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 *followed by* **Beethoven** *Symphony No. 9.* Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha (soprano), Marta Fontanals-Simmons (mezzo-soprano), Brenden Gunnell (tenor), Christopher Purves (baritone); BBC Singers, National Youth Choir, Aurora Orchestra/ Nicholas Collon

THURSDAY 22 AUGUST

PROM 43
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Ravel *Mother Goose – suite* **Mozart** *Piano Concerto No. 27* **Holmès** *Ludus pro patria – 'La nuit et l'amour'* **Mussorgsky, orch. Wood** *Pictures at an Exhibition.* Paul Lewis (piano); City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Kazuki Yamada

FRIDAY 23 AUGUST

PROM 44
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Lili Boulanger *D'un soir triste* **Debussy** *La mer* **Prokofiev** *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major* **Ravel** *La valse.* Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra/Lahav Shani (piano)

SATURDAY 24 AUGUST

PROM 45
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Eastman *Symphony No. 2, 'The Faithful Friend: The Lover Friend's Love for the Beloved' (UK premiere)* **Mahler** *Rückert-Lieder* **Sibelius** *Symphony No. 5 in E flat major.* Jamie Barton (mezzo-soprano); BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Dalia Stasevska

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST

PROM 46
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Lara Poe *Laulut maaseudulta ('Songs from the Countryside') (BBC commission: world premiere)* **Sibelius** *The Wood Nymph* **Holst** *The Planets.* Anu Komsi (soprano); Royal College of Music Chamber Choir, Royal College of Music Symphony Orchestra, Sibelius Academy Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo

MONDAY 26 AUGUST

PROM 47
2.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Doctor Who Prom
BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Alastair King
Audio-described and British Sign Language interpreted

PROM 48
7pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
See Prom 47.
Audio-described

TUESDAY 27 AUGUST

PROM 49
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Dvořák *Cello Concerto in B minor* **Suk** *Symphony No. 2, 'Asrael'.* Anastasia Kobekina (cello); Czech Philharmonic/ Jakub Hrůša

WEDNESDAY 28 AUGUST

PROM 50
6.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Kaprálová *Military Sinfonietta* **Dvořák** *Piano Concerto in G minor* **Janáček** *Glagolitic Mass.* Mao Fujita (piano), Corinne Winters (soprano), Bella Adamova (mezzo-soprano), David Butt Philip (tenor), Brindley Sherratt (bass), Christian Schmitt (organ); City of Prague Philharmonic Choir, Czech Philharmonic/Jakub Hrůša

PROM 51
10.15pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£28
Tinariwen – The Desert Blues

THURSDAY 29 AUGUST

PROM 52
6.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£26–£80
Bizet *Carmen (semi-staged; sung in French with English surtitles).* Rihab Chaieb (Carmen), Evan LeRoy Johnson (Don José), Łukasz Goliński (Escamillo) Janai Brugger (Micaëla) et al; Glyndebourne Festival Opera, London Philharmonic Orchestra/ Anja Bihlmaier

FRIDAY 30 AUGUST

PROM 53
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Stravinsky *Symphony in Three Movements* **Steve Reich** *Jacob's Ladder (UK premiere)* **Tippett** *The Midsummer Marriage – Ritual Dances* **Elgar** *Enigma Variations.* Synergy Vocals, BBC Symphony Orchestra/Martyn Brabbins

Sounds of cinema: Volker Bertelmann with his Oscar for *All Quiet on the Western Front*

OUR PROMS PICKS

Prom 34 *Wednesday 14 August*
Reel Change: Soundtracks at the Cutting Edge
It's a brave and occasionally brilliant new world for film music, so I'm particularly looking forward to this deep dive into the sonic worlds of some of modern cinema's most interesting new voices. Hearing the intense and brilliantly overbearing broad strokes of Volker Bertelmann's Oscar-winning music for *All Quiet on the Western Front* ought to be a highlight, and I can't wait to be drenched in the disorienting dread of Hildur Guðnadottir's sublime score for *Tár*. Their soundworlds will be brought to vivid life by the London Contemporary Orchestra, in the deft and energetic hands of conductor Robert Ames.
***Michael Beek** Reviews Editor*

SATURDAY 31 AUGUST

PROM 54
Recorded for broadcast on BBC Four
4pm Royal Albert Hall
£26–£80
Beethoven for Three
Beethoven *Piano Trio in D major, Op. 70 No. 1, 'Ghost'; Symphony No. 1 in C major (arr. Wosner); Piano Trio in E flat major, Op. 70 No. 2.* Emanuel Ax (piano), Leonidas Kavakos (violin), Yo-Yo Ma (cello)

PROM 55
8pm Royal Albert Hall
£26–£80
R Schumann *Piano Concerto in A minor* **Smetana** *Má vlast.* Víkingur Ólafsson (piano); Berliner Philharmoniker/ Kirill Petrenko

SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER

PROM 56
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£26–£80
Bruckner *Os justi; Locus iste; Christus factus est; Symphony No. 5 in B flat major.* BBC Singers/Owain Park; Berliner Philharmoniker/Kirill Petrenko

MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

PROM 57
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Ultra Lounge: Henry Mancini and Beyond BBC Concert Orchestra/Edwin Outwater

TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

PROM 58
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Debussy *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* **Stravinsky** *Petrushka (1947 version)* **Berlioz** *Symphonie fantastique.* Jean-Baptiste Doulcet (piano); Orchestre de Paris/ Klaus Mäkelä

WEDNESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER

PROM 59
6.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Lili Boulanger *Pie Jesu; Vieille prière bouddhique* **Fauré** *Requiem; Pelleas and Melisande – suite* **Ravel** *Daphnis and Chloé – Suite No. 2.* Golda Schultz (soprano), Laurence Kilsby

Eyes on the prize: Benjamin Grosvenor takes on Busoni's Piano Concerto

Music in motion: Patricia Kopatchinskaja is back at the Proms, this time in Schoenberg

OUR PROMS PICKS

Prom 23 *Monday 5 August*

Benjamin Grosvenor and the LPO

'It's got five movements and a male voice choir in it, you know!' I can still picture Neil Evans, my editor at *Classic CD*, scarcely able to contain his excitement as he introduced Busoni's Piano Concerto to me. His enthusiasm did the trick: I was immediately smitten with the work and, 25 years later, still am. Due to its considerable demands – it clocks in at around 70 minutes and is ferociously virtuosic – it is rarely performed live, so seeing Benjamin Grosvenor square up to this most monumental task will be a privilege indeed. It's prefaced by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Edward Gardner performing Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*, for me the most thrillingly colourful of the Russian's orchestral works.
***Jeremy Pound** Deputy Editor*

(tenor), Thomas Mole (baritone); BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Stéphane Denève

PROM 60
10.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£37
Eric Whitacre *Eternity in an Hour (BBC co-commission: world premiere).* BBC Singers, 12 Ensemble; Christopher Glynn (piano), Eric Whitacre (conductor/electronics)

THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER

PROM 61
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£26-£80
Thomas Adès *Aquifer (UK premiere)* **Bruckner** *Symphony No. 4 in E flat major, 'Romantic'.* Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Sir Simon Rattle

FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

PROM 62
8pm Royal Albert Hall
£26-£80
Mahler *Symphony No. 6 in A minor*
Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Sir Simon Rattle

SATURDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

PROM 63
10.30am Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Choral Day – 1
Parry *Coronation Anthem 'I was glad'* **Stanford** *Three Motets Op. 38* **Gardiner** *Evening Hymn* **Harris** *Faire is the heaven* **Ireland** *Greater love hath no man* **Stanford** *Eight Partsongs, Op. 127 – 'The Guest'; 'When Mary thro' the garden went'; 'To a Tree'* **Elgar** *Give unto the Lord.* Simon Johnson (organ); The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

PROM 64
2pm Royal Albert Hall
£10–£44
Choral Day – 2
Programme to include: **Jacob Collier** *World O World* **Garner arr. J. Stoddart** *Misty* **Guthrie, arr. B. Morgan** *This Land Is Your Land* **J. Rosamond Johnson, arr. R. Carter** *Lift every voice and sing* **Trad., arr. C. Dent** *He's Got the Whole World in His Arms* **Trad., arr. D. E. Dillard** *Didn' it rain.* John Stoddart (piano); Jason Max Ferdinand Singers/ Jason Max Ferdinand

PROM 65
7pm Royal Albert Hall
£15–£64
Choral Day – 3
Handel, arr. Mozart *Messiah (sung in English).* Nardus Williams (soprano), Helen Charlston (mezzo-soprano), Benjamin Hulett (tenor), Ashley Riches (bass); Fourth Choir, Jason Max Ferdinand Singers, LYC Chamber Choir, Bath Minerva Choir, Philharmonia Chorus, Voices of the River's Edge, Academy of St Martin in the Fields/John Butt

SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

PROM 66
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Tchaikovsky, arr. Ellington & Strayhorn, arr. and adapted J. Tyzik *The Nutcracker Suite* **Stewart Goodyear** *Callaloo – Caribbean Suite for piano and orchestra* **Tchaikovsky** *Symphony No. 6 in B minor, 'Pathétique'.* Stewart Goodyear (piano); Chineke!/Andrew Grams

MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

PROM 67
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Vaughan Williams *Fantasia on 'Greensleeves'* **Schoenberg** *Violin Concerto* **Shostakovich** *Symphony No. 5 in D minor.* Patricia Kopatchinskaja (violin); BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Tarmo Peltokoski

TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER

PROM 68
7pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Britten *A Midsummer Night's Dream (semi-staged; sung in English, with English surtitles).* Iestyn Davies (Oberon), Lucy Crowe (Tytania), Richard Burkhard (Bottom), Caspar Singh (Lysander) et al; Garsington Opera, Philharmonia Orchestra/Douglas Boyd

WEDNESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER

PROM 69
8pm Royal Albert Hall
£26–£80
Symphony of Lungs
Florence + The Machine, Jules Buckley Orchestra/Jules Buckley

THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER

PROM 70
6.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Bacewicz *Overture* **Tchaikovsky** *Violin Concerto in D major* **Prokofiev** *Romeo and Juliet – excerpts.* Nemanja Radulović (violin); BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Jaime Martín

PROM 71
10.15pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£37
JS Bach *The Art of Fugue*
Sir András Schiff (piano)

FRIDAY 13 SEPTEMBER

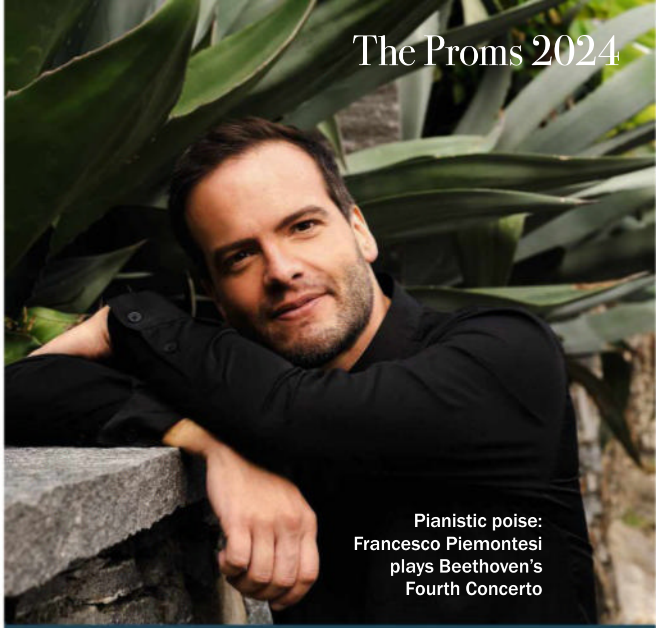
PROM 72
7.30pm Royal Albert Hall
£11–£54
Mozart *Symphony No. 1 in E flat major* **Farrenc** *Symphony No. 3 in G minor* **Beethoven** *Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, 'Eroica'.* Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Antonello Manacorda

SATURDAY 14 SEPTEMBER

PROM 73
7pm Royal Albert Hall
£50-£150
Last Night of the Proms 2024
Programme to include: **Chapí** *Las hijas del Zebedeo – 'Al pensar en el dueño de mis amores' (Carceleras)* **Fauré** *Pavane* **Ives** *Yale–Princeton Football Game* **Puccini** *Gianni Schicchi – 'O mio babbino caro'; Madam Butterfly – 'Humming Chorus'* **Saint-Saëns** *Piano Concerto No. 5 in F major, 'Egyptian' – Andante* **Carlos Simon** *Hellfighters' Blues (BBC co-commission: world premiere),* **Trad. arr. Wood**

MARCO BORGGREVE, CAMILLA BLAKE, PHILIP GATWARD

Local hero: city native Clare Hammond performs in Nottingham



Pianistic poise: Francesco Piemontesi plays Beethoven's Fourth Concerto

OUR PROMS PICKS

Prom 39 *Sunday 18 August*

Franceso Piemontesi and the Ulster Orchestra

I'll travel far to hear a performance of Dvořák's Seventh – by a whisker, my favourite of all his symphonies. The *Allegro* is Dvořák at his most tragic and noble, while the *Poco adagio* features a horn melody of heartbreaking eloquence. Then follows the most delicious in the composer's string of irresistible, folk-infused symphonic scherzos. Elsewhere on the bill, Avril Coleridge-Taylor's *A Sussex Landscape* renders that county in gripping colours: stormy one moment, wistful the next. And Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto! From the opening movement's indefinable alloy of joy and melancholy right through to the feverish finale, it's always a gripping ride.

Steve Wright *Multi-Platform Content Producer*

Fantasia on British Sea-Songs **Arne, arr. Sargent** *Rule, Britannia!* **Elgar** *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 in D major ('Land of Hope and Glory')* **Parry, orch. Elgar** *Jerusalem* **Anon. arr. Britten** *The National Anthem* **Trad., arr. P. Campbell** *Auld lang syne.* Angel Blue (soprano), Sir Stephen Hough (piano); BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo

2024 BBC PROMS: GATESHEAD EVENTS

FRIDAY 26 JULY

7.30pm The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Sage One

Tailleferre *Little Suite for Orchestra* **Sibelius** *Violin Concerto in D minor* **Dvořák** *Symphony No. 8 in G major.* Alena Baeva (violin); Royal Northern Sinfonia/ Dinis Sousa

11pm The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Sage One

Night Tracks

Hania Rani (piano/synthesiser/ vocals), Beibei Wang (percussion), Hannah Peel (presenter/synthesisers), Sara Mohr-Pietsch (presenter)

SATURDAY 27 JULY

7.30pm The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Sage One

Jordan Rakei Jordan Rakei; Royal Northern Sinfonia/ Robert Ames

10pm The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Sage Two

BBC Music Introducing: Live at the Proms

A concert featuring musicians from the BBC Music Introducing scheme

SUNDAY 28 JULY

2.30pm The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Sage One

Fantasy, Myths & Legends

Voices of the River's Edge, Royal Northern Sinfonia/Ellie Slorach

3pm The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Sage Two

Flow, My Tears – Elegies and Atonement

Daniel Pioro (violin), Ruby Hughes (soprano), Clare O'Connell (cello), David Gordon (harpsichord)

2024 BBC PROMS: BRISTOL EVENTS

SATURDAY 24 AUGUST

6pm & 8.30pm Beacon Hall, Bristol Beacon

The Virtuous Circle

Mozart *Symphony No. 40 in G minor (performed from memory) interspersed with* **Oliver Vibrans** *new work (BBC co-commission: world premiere).* Paraorchestra/ Charles Hazlewood (conductor/ co-director), Kyla Goodey (co-director), Tom Jackson Greaves (choreographer)

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST

3pm The Lantern, Bristol Beacon

BBC Singers at 100

Programme to include: **Tavener** *Song for Athene* **John Pickard** *Mass in Troubled Times* **Britten** *A Shepherd's Carol.* BBC Singers/Sofi Jeannin

5pm Beacon Hall, Bristol Beacon

Akimenko *Angel (Poème-Nocturne)* **Jennifer Higdon** *Percussion Concerto* **Niloufar Nourbakhsh** *Knell* **Tchaikovsky** *Symphony No. 5 in E minor.* Evelyn Glennie (percussion); Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Kirill Karabits

MONDAY 26 AUGUST

2pm & 4pm Beacon Hall, Bristol Beacon

CBeebies Prom: Ocean Adventure. Dani Howard *Argentum – excerpt* **Dominique Le Gendre** *Dolphin Dance* **Telemann** *Water Music – excerpt* **Ravel** *Mother Goose – The Fairy Garden* **Britten** *Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes – Storm* **Mason Bates** *Whalesong* **Eleanor Alberga** *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs – Celebration Dance.* Andy Day and Puja Panchkoty; Southbank Sinfonia/Kwamé Ryan

2024 BBC PROMS: NEWPORT EVENTS

SUNDAY 4 AUGUST

3pm The Riverfront, Newport

Including **Bloch** *Two Psalms – Prelude* **Dvořák** *String Quartet No. 13 in G major, Op. 106.* Mahan Mirarab (guitar), vision string quartet

2024 BBC PROMS: BELFAST EVENTS

SUNDAY 11 AUGUST

3pm Ulster Hall, Belfast

Holmès *Les heures* **Debussy** *String Quartet in G minor* **Fauré** *La bonne chanson.* James Atkinson (baritone), Michael Pandya (piano); Quatuor Van Kuijk

2024 BBC PROMS: ABERDEEN EVENTS

SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER

3pm Cowdray Hall, Aberdeen

'I never laid eyes on Aeneas ...': Women's Stories from the Ancient World

A sequence of songs and arias for voice and lute, to include music by **Blow**, **F Caccini**, **Handel** and **Purcell**

Nardus Williams (soprano), Elizabeth Kenny (lute); Dame Mary Beard (presenter)

2024 BBC PROMS: NOTTINGHAM EVENTS

SATURDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

5pm Albert Hall, Nottingham

BBC Young Composer

New works by winners of last year's BBC Young Composer competition, including **Pascal Bachmann**, **Atharv Gupta**, **Avram Harris**, **Advaith Jagannath**, **Reese Carly Manglicmot**, **Jamie Smith**. Jess Gillam (presenter); BBC Concert Orchestra/Hugh Brunt

SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

4pm Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham

Carwithen, arr. P Lane *The Men of Sherwood Forest – overture* **Elizabeth Kelly** *Lace Machine (BBC commission: world premiere)* **Rachmaninov** *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* **Korngold** *The Adventures of Robin Hood – suite* **Sibelius** *Symphony No. 3 in C major.* Clare Hammond (piano); BBC Concert Orchestra/ Anna-Maria Helsing

Perfect Finnish

As Sakari Oramo prepares to conduct four BBC Proms concerts this season – including The Last Night – he speaks to John Allison about his long and successful role as chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra

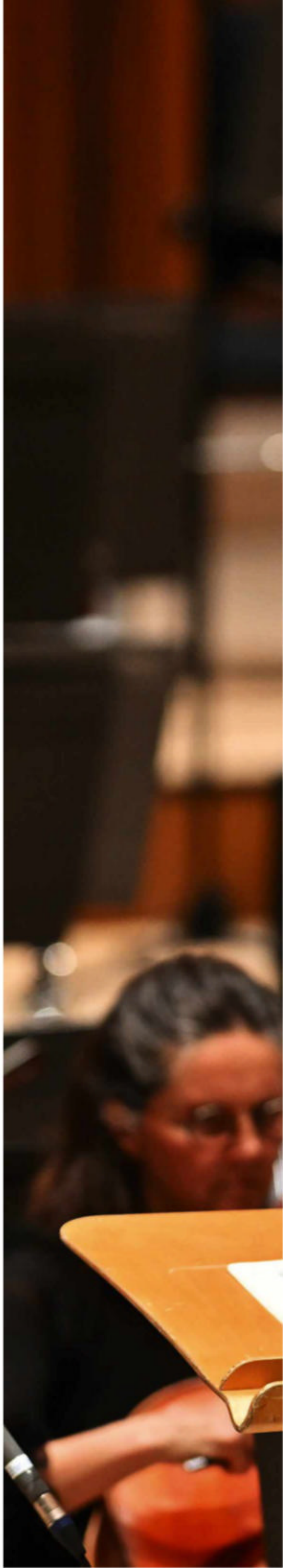
Few of the world's major maestros can boast of a light carbon footprint. It's hardly compatible with orchestra-hopping, yet some conductors manage better than others. Despite his busy international schedule, Sakari Oramo succeeds at least on a local level: whether in Helsinki or London, I've never known him not to turn up for an interview on a bicycle, and he still has his helmet in hand when we meet in the foyer of the Royal College of Music (RCM) before a preliminary rehearsal there for one of his 2024 BBC Proms programmes.

It helps that the Finnish conductor has in recent years focused the most substantial part of his work in Helsinki, his home when not travelling, and London, where for the last decade he has been chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra (BBC SO). These two bases come together in the third (25 Aug) of his four Proms this summer, when he conducts the combined orchestras of the Royal College of Music and Sibelius Academy, a ground-breaking collaboration that represents a Proms debut for both institutions with a programme mixing well-known Holst (*The Planets*) with little-known Sibelius (*The Wood Nymph*) and the world premiere of a newly commissioned song cycle by Lara Poe (*Songs from the Countryside*).

Oramo has been a professor at the Sibelius Academy since 2020, but Finland's foremost musical training institution has always been a part of his life. 'I studied violin there, and conducting later on,' though he points out that because of a fast-rising career he never actually graduated. 'I was getting too busy. But both my parents were professors there — my mother a professor of piano for decades, and my father a professor of musicology. It kind of goes in the family. Now I conduct about two or three concerts per academic year with the orchestra of the Academy. Also, I'm supervising the whole orchestral programme, seeing that it's balanced. It's a big task. I thought when I embarked on it that it should be possible to combine an international career with teaching, as that's for everyone's good. But it's not so easy…'

> 'It should be possible to combine an international career with teaching – that's for everyone's good'

All of Oramo's other Proms this year are with the BBC SO, and an emphasis on English and Finnish music – specialities of the conductor – makes them look quite personal (less so the Last Night on 14 Sept, which of course has its formula). Add in his lengthy tenure at the BBC SO, his lifelong


MARK ALLAN

Right at home: Oramo conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra at Barbican, London, October 2023

A musical journey: (clockwise from right) Oramo brings his personal stamp to the Proms; Saariaho's *Mirage* features; as does a premiere by Lara Poe; and Sibelius, in a 1913 portrait by Antti Favén

connection with the Sibelius Academy and the fact that one of the soloists is his wife, the soprano Anu Komsi, and these concerts appear positively autobiographical. 'Yes, I'm sort of able to write my name under these programmes. I think that's the whole point of being involved somewhere for the long term. When I started as chief conductor, the BBC SO and [the then general manager] Paul Hughes put it very beautifully — saying they wanted me to take them on a musical journey. Ideally, that's what a long relationship with a conductor is all about.'

That musical journey has, unforgettably, included such events as Busoni's Piano Concerto (with Garrick Ohlsson) and performances of the pioneering Croatian composer Dora Pejačević, but Oramo prefers to leave some mainstream favourites such as Bruckner and Wagner to others. 'One of my nightmares is doing Bruckner at the Barbican, because it's just not suited to that space. At the Proms I've done the Fifth Symphony. But I don't do a lot of Bruckner – I just don't feel I'm at my best with his music.'

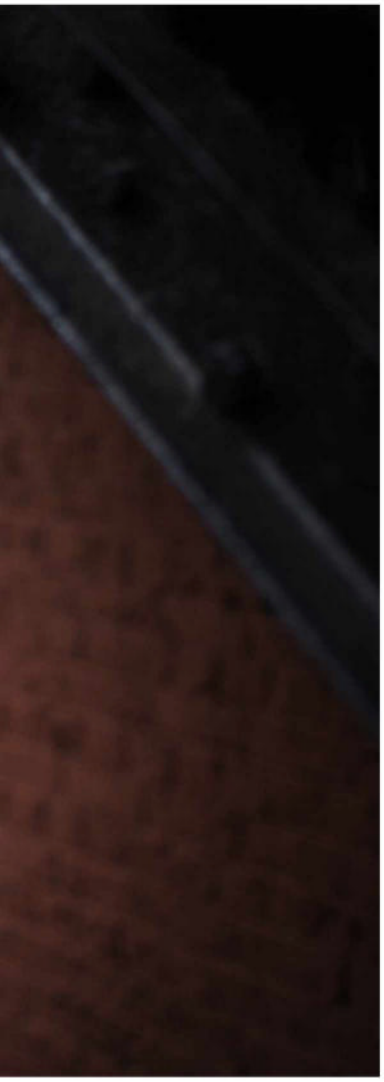
He reveals that at present he's not conducting any Russian music. 'It's a personal choice. For me, we should not be ignoring the fact that the Russian propaganda machine is using this fantastic heritage of Russian music for a set of purposes that are not really legitimate. That's why I think that at the moment we need to stay away from routinely programming Tchaikovsky or Rimsky-Korsakov, for example – notwithstanding what the composers' ideas were or that maybe they had nothing to do with the sort of behaviour we see from Russia. But they are all part of one cultural realm, and as a Finn I feel particularly strongly about it.'

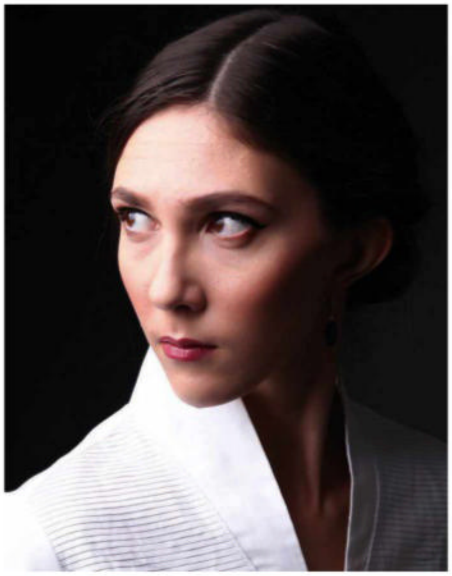
The long border Finland shares with Russia shaped his awareness early on – not always negatively. 'I worked with Soviet violin teachers, and of course with Ilya Musin, the great conducting teacher who came from Leningrad/St Petersburg to the Sibelius Academy to teach. I studied the violin in Holland with Viktor Liberman, who had been leader of the Leningrad Philharmonic in Yevgeny Mravinsky's time. So, I have nothing against Russian people or Russian culture. Maybe I sometimes feel a bit nostalgic about missing Russian music, but I think it's better to stay away from it at this stage.'

'I've experienced such professionalism, warmth and community at the BBC SO'

Oramo was still a relatively unknown conductor when he so successfully succeeded Simon Rattle at the helm of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 1998, and he subsequently enjoyed distinguished tenures at the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra (where he had earlier been concertmaster). Yet he singles out his work with the BBC SO as the highlight of his career so far. 'Nowhere have I experienced such a warmth, such a great professional attitude, such a great feeling of community — and a feeling of musicianship, of willingness to improve and do better, despite them already being very good. All my long-term orchestral relationships have been great in their way. But the BBC SO is the highlight – the sort of thing to which I've always aspired. When I started, I didn't expect it to grow into what it has. Every programme I choose to do with the orchestra has its own kind of identity, its own personality.'

Earlier in his career, Oramo championed the neglected English and Finnish composers John Foulds and Armas Launis, and now he is turning his attention to their contemporary Gustav Holst, conducting him twice at the Proms (3 & 25 Aug) and putting him in the context of the European mainstream. This context also shapes





his view of another of his favourites, Elgar, whose Cello Concerto features in the 3 August Prom alongside Harvey's *Tranquil Abiding* and Holst's *The Cloud Messenger*. 'I love Holst's way of writing so precisely. It's not easy to conduct; it doesn't play itself. It's meticulous music – a little like Ravel in that sense.'

Contemporary music is another of Oramo's preoccupations, and this will be the first time he has conducted the Finnish-American composer Lara Poe. 'She grew up in both the US and Finland; and she studied here in London at the RCM, and also with George Benjamin – a good pedigree!' *Songs From the Countryside* has been composed for, and in collaboration with, Anu Komsi. 'The words come from Lara's grandmother and aunt, telling of their childhoods in remote Finland. Lara is interested in this kind of past and in our relationship to nature and the creatures we should be looking after.'

In tribute to the late Kaija Saariaho, Oramo will also conduct *Mirage* for soprano, cello and orchestra (with soloists Silja Aalto and Anssi Karttunen, a longstanding friend and collaborator of the composer) on 9 August. 'Both Anu and I were close to Kaija. And Anu even more so because she commissioned both the *Leino Songs* and *Saarikoski Songs* and is their dedicatee. We go back such a long way, but this homage is not just personal or sentimental — the music is so good and deserves to be heard, not neglected as can happen when composers die.'

Looking back over his decade with the BBC SO, Oramo cites a recent Sibelius symphony cycle they toured in Switzerland as a personal highlight. 'I couldn't live without Sibelius,' he reflects. 'I've been exposed to his music all my life in one way or another, yet I'm constantly finding new things in his works. I feel very inspired by Sibelius as a person. Not necessarily because he was a Finn – simply because he was a thinker of music.' Although there was another factor that made those Swiss concerts special – 'We were in great halls' – he's philosophical about the shortcomings of London's venues and doesn't allow himself to sound too envious even of Helsinki's remarkable Musiikkitalo. 'Sure, this is something every London orchestra feels, and there doesn't seem to be any solution to the problem. There's a lack of caring about the arts and for music here. I'm saying this a bit reluctantly because I still think London's musical life is great. And it's not to say there aren't threats to the position of music in Helsinki. Just recently the Finnish ministry of culture proposed sweeping cuts over several years to the arts budget.'

Indeed, cuts both threatened and carried out at Finland's national broadcaster, Yle, proved good practice for Oramo when the BBC dangled the sword last year, and he was reportedly tough and uncompromising in the BBC negotiations that followed. 'There was no other way. I'm very insistent that the unique qualities of the BBC SO need to be recognised. But it was still a shock – I happened to be in Cologne for a concert on the day the threat was announced, and it came out of the blue, almost destroying my concert. Now the discussions have gained a more positive tone, and we are working with the new director, Bill Chandler, to be seen as the best orchestra in London, to prove ourselves through quality. In fact, we need to be the best radio orchestra in the world. Maybe we're not yet, but we will be. I'm pretty sure about that.'

BEN EALOVEGA, GETTY

> My whole life, I've wanted to do things differently. Otherwise, I'd find it difficult to stay myself

THE BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

Laura van der Heijden

With her recording of Walton's Concerto, the cellist is returning to the repertoire of her BBC Young Musician win – but she's bringing a new, mature focus, as she tells **Ariane Todes**

PHOTOGRAPHY: STEPHANE CRAYTON

You may know Laura van der Heijden from the Walton Cello Concerto that won her BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2012, aged only 15 – a performance of preternatural poise, intelligence and intensity. Since then, she's kept a low profile, eschewing the exposure of other Young Musician winners, some of whom are now first-name brands. She has trodden her own path resolutely, studying Music at Cambridge University rather than going to conservatoire, pursuing chamber music and recitals more than the international concerto career she undoubtedly merits, and recently having gone back to study – with a violin professor.

Only now, 12 years on from her BBC win, has she finally put the Walton on record (for Chandos), with Ryan Wigglesworth and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, alongside Bridge's *Oration* and a concerto written for her by Cheryl Frances-Hoad, which she performs in her BBC Proms debut this month. What did it feel like returning to the Walton? 'I was definitely most nervous for that piece. We started the recording sessions with it, and because it's my first concerto recording, it was a very different experience to making chamber recordings. And obviously, I put quite a lot of pressure on myself.'

It is indeed obvious that van der Heijden puts quite a lot of pressure on herself – it's a recurring theme in our conversation. When I ask how she thinks she's changed as a player since then, she reveals, 'Sometimes I look back and think, "Was I better then?" But I think lots of people do that. At different times in your life, you look back and sometimes it'll be, "I was better then", or sometimes you'll have improved. It has so much to do with your mental state while you're comparing yourself. Hopefully, I've found my own voice more, although to some extent that final was before I'd become self-aware. I was still very open to the world and maybe slightly naïve. I felt

quite honestly myself and wasn't afraid. Pretty much instantly after the final I felt a lot of pressure from myself – not necessarily from people around me. I felt I had something to live up to. That's been a long process and I feel I'm just getting started trying to find out who I am as a musician, and to be that as honestly and truthfully as possible.'

She has been open about the challenges of stage fright, one of the taboo subjects of classical music, and recording the Walton brought back sometimes painful memories. 'With pieces I've played since I was that age, I often have more embedded stage fright, whereas I have a different relationship to concertos that I've learnt later on. With the Walton, it took approaching it as "adult me" to get past some of those worries. On one hand, physically, it lies in my fingers more, so that's good, but it's quite hard to undo some of the fears that come with it.'

Alongside Walton and Bridge sits Frances-Hoad's new Cello Concerto, 'Earth, Sea, Air', of which van der Heijden gave the premiere last year. She was already a fan of Frances-Hoad, her teacher Leonid Gorokhov having recorded the composer's *Invocation*, so the two started talking, looking for a concept based around nature. 'We exchanged lots of pictures, images and stories about swifts. Maybe that explains why I'm so high up – it's stratospheric. There were textures I said I loved – brass stabs, soft tremolo strings – and she added those in. There was some back and forth about cello technique, but quite minimal because she's a great writer.'

Working like this with composers offers surprising revelations: 'It shows elements of how they perceive you that

'I'm just starting to find out who I am as a musician, and to be as honest as possible'

you hadn't realised. This has happened before: a friend of mine, Lara Weaver, wrote me a couple of pieces. I expected both composers to see long, gentle melodic lines as my thing, but their pieces were much stronger than I expected. I thought, "Okay, you're seeing me as a feisty person, and I think I'm just melodic lines." The concerto is also intense and muscular. It's as much about the composer's language as the person they're writing for, but I found that an interesting process.'

The intensity and muscle are evident in her Walton, and in the Prokofiev Cello Sonata from her 2018 album *1948*, but so is the gentleness and melody. She does it all – from fragility to power, introversion to extroversion. Her playing – just as her conversation – is deeply thoughtful, personal and sincere. Not enough for her, though, which is why she signed up to the class of violinist Antje Weithaas in Berlin: 'I went and played to her, and she said exactly the kinds of things that I felt I needed to hear, like, "You're not being yourself", or "There's a wall between your feelings and the instrument." That's something I'm still trying to work on. People probably wouldn't say that if they

All together now: (left to right) Cheryl Frances-Hoad worked with van der Heijden on concepts for her Cello Concerto; the new disc; rehearsing at Kings Place, 2023; with chamber partner Jâms Coleman

saw me as a musician, but when you're too self-critical you end up putting a wall between what wants to come out and what comes out.'

The work they're doing together is as much physical as mental, she explains: 'Sometimes, if you connect to your body more, your brain quietens down, so it's a lot about connecting to the core and freeing up the body so there isn't tension that stops the flow of sound. But then the mental side is, "What do you want to say? How do you want to say it?" She is helping me to connect in that way. My whole life, I've wanted to do things slightly differently, partly because it's exciting and interesting, but also because I sometimes fear that if I'm in the normal environment, I might find it difficult to stay myself.'

Perhaps as respite from this extreme self-scrutiny, one of her favourite musical relationships is with Kaleidoscope, the chamber collective that performs unusual and neglected repertoire. 'A huge part of Kaleidoscope is to perform pieces that haven't been played very much and that's an absolute light in my life,' she explains. 'They're my dear friends and we do exciting musical projects together.'

She seems fairly ambivalent about her academic studies ('It turns out, having gone to Cambridge, that I'm a deeply instinctive musician, and I don't want to know names and definitions') but credits a course on 'Decolonising the Ear' with changing her outlook about repertoire: 'I hadn't been exposed to anything about colonialism and it was mind-blowing, and has changed my perspective on my role in programming. When you're in it so deeply, you're not aware of the context: how the canon has emerged and that it doesn't need to be that way. It's also more interesting to programme pieces that haven't been played as much. There's a pressure with Beethoven and Mozart to be a certain way: with pieces that haven't been played so often, there's less performance history, so the performer is freer to interpret.'

Typically thoughtful, she sees both sides of the debate, though, and finds herself somewhere in the middle, as she explains: 'It's a strange thing to be playing old music and knowing how to reinvent your relationship to it. The classical music world has a reputation for being a bit elitist and insular, but it can be very inviting, and lots of people feel very deeply about the music that's played. I haven't found my place along that spectrum. Some people have a clear voice and want to be musical activists, and programme more daringly than I do and be very vocal. I've found a sort of middle ground.'

Despite this uncertainty, or maybe because of it, her repertoire choices are relatively diverse and beautifully conceived. Her most recent recital disc, the lunar-themed *Path to the Moon* with Jâms Coleman, ranged from Korngold to Walker via Price and Britten, and their previous *Pohádka: Tales from Prague to Budapest* included works by Kaprálová and Mihály alongside Kodály, Janáček and Dvořák. She's started singing in performances ('It's a way of accessing something for me that feels important, and it's an easy way to make a programme more varied') and has moved beyond the standard concertos, working on Barber, Martinů and Kabalevsky. The mix of everything suits her: 'I've figured out that I want and need variety. If I only do one thing, I get very stuck.'

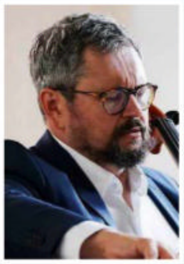
At one point in our interview, van der Heijden admits, 'You've caught me at a time when I'm trying to figure everything out.' I suspect she's the type of person who is always trying to figure everything out – it's an uncomfortable truth that the finest musicians are often the ones who question themselves most unrelentingly. I hope that she finds the answers she's looking for, and that we get to the enjoy the fruits of her discoveries along the way.

MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA, MATTHEW JOHNSON, STEPHANE CRAYTON, THORSTEN SCHERZ

Wise words: drawing on personal experience

Youthful impressions

Advice for musical children



Natural talent will only get you so far, so finding the right teacher to guide a musical child is of paramount importance. 'The really crucial thing is finding a teacher whom the child feels understands them and who wants the same things as they do,' says Laura van der Heijden. 'When I first went to see my teacher Leonid Gorokhov (above), I felt he got me and said the right thing at the right time in the right way. Sometimes there is a communication barrier, where you hear something but you don't understand what's being communicated, so that's very important. He helped me a lot with technique and being able to play the things that were in my mind.

'I did a lot of practice when I was younger, and one thing the pianist Alison Rhind always said to me was that "practice makes permanent – not perfect". Repetition makes it permanent and if you're practising in a way that is inefficient and bad, you're not helping yourself at all. It's better to practise less but in a more concentrated, efficient, targeted and goal-orientated way than to practise hours and hours. There's a feeling that as a musician you need to practise for hours, and sometimes that is true physically, to build up those tiny muscles, but most of all it's about your intention when you're practising.'

Music meets art

Trio Silhouette *(Piano, Cello and Movement)*, winners of 2022 under the theme 'Fish'

Artist agency Goodmesh hosts a unique art competition in November with a bold, inspirational theme

Goodmesh Concours is a music competition like no other. This unique annual interdisciplinary event challenges participants to integrate a variety of art forms into performance. The result? A dynamic exploration of the relationship between music and art.

Goodmesh Concours is designed to stimulate inclusive and diverse collaborations. By bringing together artists from different disciplines it aims 'to redefine the landscape of contemporary art, inspiring innovation and exploration' under the banner of its ethos, 'Arts Unite – Art Unites'.

'While conventional contests often focus solely on musical performance and require specific repertoire, Goodmesh encourages participants to integrate music with various art forms, such as dance, visual art or theatre,' explains Goodmesh's artistic director Janina Lorenci. 'This innovative approach allows for artistic freedom and exploration, resulting in a rich tapestry of multidisciplinary performances.'

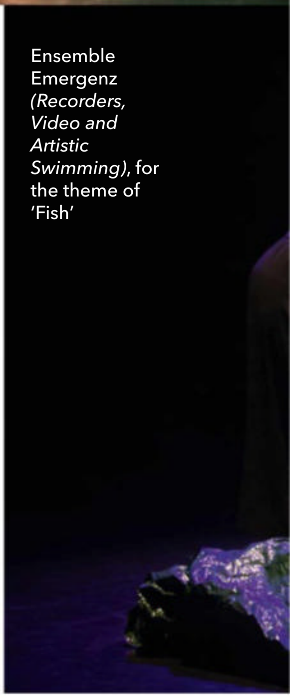
The project was launched amid the challenges of Covid-19 in a bid to provide inspiration, encouragement and a platform to keep creating. 'This initiative flourished,' says Goodmesh's brand manager, Aliaksandra Pirazhenka 'affirming the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration in fostering creativity and resilience in the face of adversity.'

Each year Goodmesh Concours provides a theme for inspiration. In 2020, musicians and artists were asked to find creative impetus in the title 'Body Respect', which saw more than 200 interdisciplinary artists from more than 30 countries entering performances. In 2023, the title 'Full Moon' provided inspiration, while AI will stimulate creativity for 2024 with the theme, 'ARTificial'.

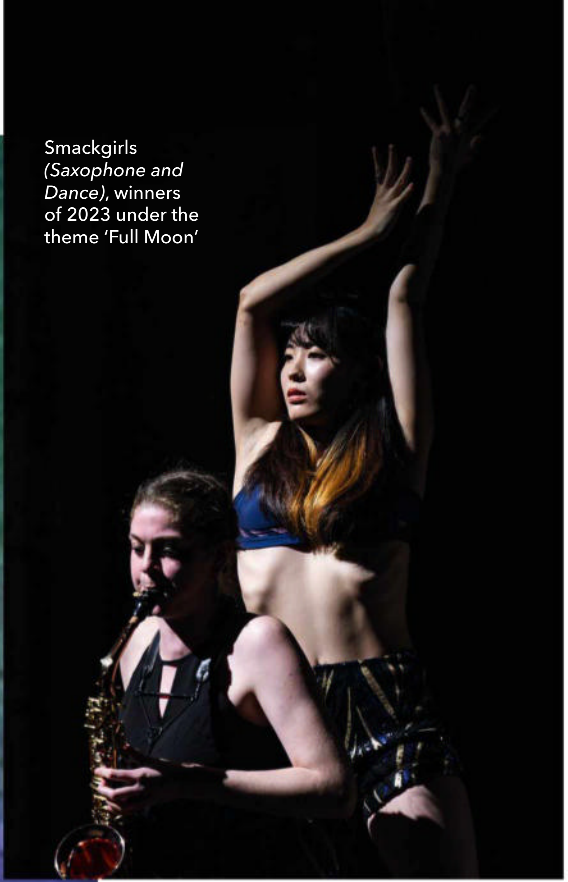
Man and machine

The role of AI in music and art is a hotly debated topic. While we wait to see how the relationship between data and creativity develops, Goodmesh Concours dives headfirst into the melee with what the team says is its 'most ambitious theme to date'. Celebrate the role of AI in the arts or argue against it: however it provides inspiration, musicians and artists are being asked to use AI as a catalyst for creativity with 'ARTificial'.

Entrants to this year's competition are being asked to consider



Ensemble Emergenz *(Recorders, Video and Artistic Swimming)*, for the theme of 'Fish'



Smackgirls *(Saxophone and Dance)*, winners of 2023 under the theme 'Full Moon'

Goodmesh Team: Janina Lorenci, Jacques Goddijn, Aliaksandra Pirazhenka

questions in their performances, including, 'How does AI influence artistic expression?' and 'Is AI a disruptor of artistic norms?'. 'The choice of AI and the arts as the theme for the 2024 competition stems from the profound impact of AI across diverse sectors,' Jacques Goddijn, founder of Goodmesh Concours, explains. 'We aim to explore how artists interpret this theme and offer unique perspectives on the complex relationship between humanity and technology. Through the 'ARTificial' theme, we invite participants to delve into the emotional, ethical, and creative dimensions of AI, fostering critical discourse and innovation within the artistic community.'

Conform to create

There are two main rules to enter Goodmesh Concours 2024. Firstly, to combine music with another art form; secondly, to create a performance based on this year's theme 'ARTificial'. Entrants must be over 18 and all music genres are eligible, including chamber music with up to six members.

Submissions will be judged by a panel of specialists from diverse artistic disciplines. The judges include the Goodmesh team: Jacques Goddijn, Aliaksandra Pirazhenka and Janina Lorenci. Sitting alongside this trio will be Bulgarian percussionist and founder of the award-winning Youth Percussion Pool, Tatiana Koleva. Dutch gallery founder Nina Hama, conductor, pianist and music director of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Richard Egarr, and AI/abstract artist Noëlle Van Dijk.

The deadline for submission is 15 September with the final event taking place on 25 November 2024 at Amsterdam's prestigious concert hall, The Royal Concertgebouw.

There are cash prizes worth up to €25,000, plus winners will enjoy press coverage, professional photoshoots and videos.

The team at Goodmesh say they are particularly excited to celebrate five years of 'creativity and collaboration' and are expecting a range of diverse and unique applications from contestants around the world.

'With each passing year, we strive to elevate the competition by offering more valuable prizes, assembling a diverse panel of judges, and facilitating networking opportunities for participants,' says Janina Lorenci, who also informs us that the Goodmesh Concours team is looking to expand. 'We've received expressions of interest from foreign countries to host similar contests, indicating a promising future of expansion and international collaboration for Goodmesh.'

To enter this year's Goodmesh Concours competition or for more details on how to enter, visit **www.goodmesh.nl**

Goodmesh

Olympic dreams

As the Olympic Games come to Paris, Jeremy Pound explores how music has played its part in shaping this greatest of sporting events

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The Ancient Greeks loved the arts, and they loved sport. What's more, they liked putting the two together – the Pythian, Nemean, Isthmian and Panathenaic games all featured contests for poetry and music alongside the likes of wrestling, running and chariot racing. Not so the original Olympic Games. For its first four centuries from 776 BC, this quadrennial event was strictly reserved for young men to strip naked, oil up and run faster, throw further, punch harder and ride better than each other. But then, in 396 BC, even the Olympics succumbed to the allure of the arts, as a contest for heralds and trumpeters was introduced.

Fast forward another 23 centuries, and Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games, dreamed of a similar marriage of sport and arts. A true renaissance man who was equally at home in the opera house as on a rugby field, de Coubertin had already overseen the first two outings of his new Olympics – in Athens (1896) and Paris (1900) – when he started to moot that they should embrace cultural activities too, setting out his ideas in an article in *Le Figaro* in 1904 and then at a conference in Paris two years later. His plans for an accompanying pan-artistic celebration of sport effectively paved the way for the increasingly spectacular opening and closing

Faster, higher, stronger: pianists Lang Lang and Muzi Li take centre stage in the Bird's Nest stadium at the opening of the Beijing Olympics, 2008; (below left) an Athenian *pelike*, c510 BC, depicts boxers fighting to the sound of the *aulos*

Running commentary: (above) sprinter Harold Abrahams, a fan of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Yeomen of the Guard* (above left), chats to the Prince of Wales after his 100m heat in Paris, 1924; (below left) composer Charles Villiers Stanford championed choral singing as an Olympic event

ceremonies that would be a feature of Games to come, but he also wanted more – namely to integrate the arts into the competition itself. From a musical point of view his wish has, to some extent, been fulfilled over the years, though not always in ways that he might have expected...

1908 Win when you're singing

The run-up to the 1908 Olympics was a chaotic affair. That year's Games should have been in Rome but, following a catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1906, the Italian government decided to direct its resources elsewhere. And so, as London stepped in with just two years to prepare, the introduction and organisation of five new competitive arts events – architecture, painting, sculpture, literature and music composition – was always going to be a battle against the clock. Charles Villiers Stanford was put in charge of formatting the music composition event but soon realised, as did his colleagues in charge of the other four disciplines, that he had an impossible job on his hands. Instead, suggested the composer, why not have a choral competition? This might be a more practical option, not least as singing had been strongly advocated at the 1906 Paris conference as an important aid to physical health. His idea was, alas, rejected and London 1908 went ahead arts competition-free, but by the time of the Stockholm Games in 2012, all five events were ready to take their place in the schedule.

> 'Put in charge of the music composition event in London 1908, Charles Villiers Stanford soon realised that he had an impossible job on his hands'

1924 Fired up by G&S

For the 1924 Olympics in Paris, the playing of national anthems as winners collected their medals was introduced. The stipulation that no anthem could be longer than 80 seconds, however, meant that for a number of countries some nifty editing had to be done first. The nine Brits to enjoy a gold medal-earned 'God save the King' included 100m sprinter Harold Abrahams, though perhaps he might have preferred a little Gilbert and Sullivan as he stood on the podium? When, 57 years later, Abrahams's exploits were celebrated in the film *Chariots of Fire*, his portrayed infatuation with G&S was by no means a case of artistic licence – in real life, he'd go on to marry the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company singer Sybil Evers, and in 1959 chose *The Yeomen of the Guard* Overture as his favourite track on BBC Radio's *Desert Island Discs*.

1932 A major blow for Suk

Though launched with the best intentions, the musical composition event at the Olympics

Olympic record: (right) Olga Fikotová spins to gold in Melbourne, 1956; (below) Torvill and Dean put Ravel on ice at the 1984 Winter Olympics; (below right) Richard Strauss sulks, 1936; (opposite) Gershwin is played on 84 pianos at the 1984 opening ceremony in Los Angeles

was hardly a roaring success. Faced with a patchy level of entries, the judges rarely elected to award all three medals, and in 1924 left the podium totally empty. Of those who did win medals over the years, only one was a well-known name, when Josef Suk took silver at Los Angeles in 1932 (no gold or bronze was awarded that year). And even then, the Czech composer's *Towards a New Life* was not written specially for the occasion, but was simply a rehash of a patriotic march composed for the Czech army back in 1919. In 1936, the music composition event was split into three categories – orchestral, instrumental and vocal/choral – with the whole lot being jettisoned just one Olympics later, in 1948.

1936 Strauss's podium odium

'I am whiling away the boredom of the advent season by composing an *Olympic Hymn* for the plebs – I of all people, who hate and despise sports.' These were the words of Richard Strauss, the least likely of all composers to have had a connection with the Olympics. Perhaps even more surprising was that he was there in person to conduct the work at the Olympics opening ceremony in Berlin on 1 August 1936, as only the year before he had been unceremoniously sacked as president of the Reich Chamber of Musicians for criticising the Nazi regime. One suspects he was deemed simply too prestigious a part of Hitler's notorious Olympic showcase to be omitted. He certainly gave himself plenty to play with, scoring his *Olympic Hymn* for huge choral and orchestral forces including 'four trumpets, multiplied by four if possible...'.

> 'I am whiling away the boredom of the advent season by composing an *Olympic Hymn* for the plebs'

1956 A revolutionary approach

A different Strauss – Johann II – was partly to thank for bringing a little Olympic glory to Czechoslovakia in Melbourne in 1956. When, only two years earlier, Olga Fikotová took up the discus at university in Prague, veteran coach Otakar Jandera not only saw the potential of the 5'11" athlete but also worked out a canny way of helping her develop the sense of rhythm needed to spin effectively in the circle before throwing. 'He started off by playing the *Blue Danube* over and over again on the stadium loudspeakers and had me making turns,' remembered Fikotová later. Masterful, though surely not even Jandera could have possibly foreseen his rookie athlete winning the gold medal with a new Olympic record within such a short space of time.

1984 Ravel, and the art of timing

Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean were also quite handy at moving in time to music. When, at the Sarajevo Winter Olympics in 1984, the British ice dancers racked up high scores for their Rimsky-Korsakov *Capriccio espagnol*-inspired original set piece routine, a gold medal already looked likely. And the best was yet to come: the free dance, skated to Ravel's *Boléro*. But when the big moment arrived, the millions of Brits tuning

in to watch on TV were surprised to see the pair spend the first few seconds of the music kneeling on the ice, swaying to and fro. What was going on? Answer: rules stated that a free dance routine was not allowed to be more than 4 minutes 10 seconds long, but distilling Ravel's 15-minute masterpiece down to less than 4 minutes 18 seconds had proved impossible; therefore, as a routine doesn't officially start until the blade of a skate touches the ice, there was only one thing for it... The judges' approval was revealed by a row of perfect sixes, as Torvill and Dean glided to gold and Ravel's *Boléro* soared to unprecedented popularity in the UK.

1984 Summon John Williams

Los Angeles rolled out the big guns for the opening ceremony of the 1984 Summer Olympics. Proceedings began with a new 'Welcome' song by film composer Marvin Hamlisch and the entry of the Olympic torch was accompanied by Philip Glass conducting his own *The Olympian*. No fewer than 84 grand pianos, meanwhile, were wheeled out for Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. This was also the moment when John Williams began to make his indelible mark on the Olympics, as the nations paraded into the stadium to his *Olympic Fanfare and Theme*. Williams would go on to write music for three further Olympics: *Olympic Spirit* for Seoul, 1988; *Summon the Heroes* for Atlanta, 1996; and *Call of the Champions* for the Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City, 2002. With the Olympics heading back to Los Angeles in 2028, don't bet on him having finished yet.

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Haydn to nothing

Of the national anthems you will hear played at the 2024 Olympics, only one will have been written by a really well known composer – Germany's 'Deutschland über Alles', with music by Haydn (above). Of the others, Italy's jaunty 'Il Canto degli Italiani' sounds as though it could be by Verdi but is in fact the work of one Michele Novaro, while the attribution of Austria's 'Land der Berge, Land am Strome' to Mozart is very doubtful. Admittedly, the Vatican City's 'Inno e Marcia Pontificale' does have a famous composer in the form of Charles Gounod, but unless a world-class shotputter, kayaker or weightlifter has been found amongst the ranks of the cardinals, we are unlikely to hear it at the Olympics.

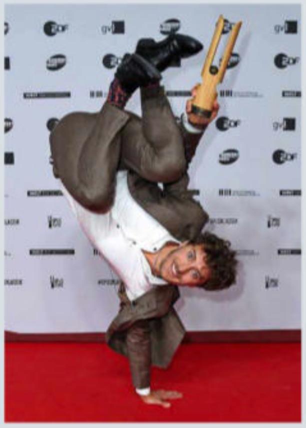
2008 Heard but not seen

Los Angeles marked 1984 with 84 pianos; 24 years later, Beijing went for a similar numerical trick, with 2008 drummers beating in time at its dazzling opening ceremony at the Bird's Nest stadium. Lang Lang was another of the evening's star turns, the 26-year-old pianist looking entirely unfazed by playing in front of a TV audience of 2.3 billion people. And seven-year-old Yang Peiyi also grabbed the headlines, albeit in a less fortunate manner – chosen to sing 'Ode to the Motherland', the sweet-voiced Peiyi was deemed not pretty enough for TV by the authorities, who replaced her on stage with a more camera-friendly, lip-synching Lin Miaoke. Confidence mercifully still intact, Peiyi went on to release her debut album the following year.

2012 Rattle passes the baton

Why have just one world-famous conductor when you can have two? First up at the London 2012 opening ceremony was Sir Simon Rattle who, five years ahead of becoming music director of the London Symphony Orchestra, led his future charges in Vangelis's *Chariots of Fire* – a rendition adorned by the comic turn of Rowan Atkinson, in Mr Bean mode, on the synthesiser.

And then, at the more serious end of the ceremony, came the appearance of the great Daniel Barenboim as one of the eight notables carrying the Olympic Flag into position. With each of the eight having been chosen as the



Setting the Seine

The cultural Olympiad

Paris 2024 will see the French capital richly adorned with music. From May to the final day of the Paralympics in September, the Cultural Olympiad will feature nine high-profile events, each themed to highlight the city and its big sporting occasion.

One of these is Vivaldi's *L'Olimpiade*, staged at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées from 20-23 June. Set near the site of Olympia at the time of the Games, Vivaldi's tale of love and betrayal stars Baroque music's own vaulting Pole, the breakdancing countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński (above). At the Opéra Bastille on 1 July, meanwhile, David Lang's *Crowd Out* will feature 1,000 untrained singers as the American composer conjures up the thrill of a stadium in full voice.

Concerts at either end of the Cultural Olympiad mark the transition of this year's games in Paris to 2028's in Los Angeles. By the time you read this, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and conductor Gustavo Dudamel will have already launched proceedings with a performance at the Philharmonie de Paris (31 May), and on 7 & 8 Sept, the Théâtre du Chatelet hosts *Let Us Dance*, with music by Ravel and Gershwin. And for those who like the really big picture, Abel Gance's epic 1927 film *Napoléon* will be shown at Grand Rex on 4 & 5 July, complete with live choir and orchestra.

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Dancing to Elgar: Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro land their moment of glory in London, 2012; (below) Vanessa-Mae makes it down in one piece

representative of an Olympic value, Barenboim, founder of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra to promote peaceful co-existence between Israeli and Arab musicians, was there as a symbol of 'harmony in place of discord'. It had been a busy evening for the maestro, who had hotfooted it from, appropriately, west to east London after conducting his orchestra in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the BBC Proms.

2012 Elgar's introduction and Valegro

Elgar's keen interest in horses revolved largely around whether or not they were winning him a few bob in the 3.30 at Worcester. Nonetheless, one likes to think that he'd have been mighty proud to know that, 78 years after his death, one would be ridden to Olympic gold to the sound of his music. The winner of that gold was Charlotte Dujardin who, at London's Greenwich Park, partnered Valegro to victory in the Individual Dressage – the 'dancing horse' event – to a medley that included Vaughan Williams, Holst, *The Great Escape*, 'Live and Let Die' and, rounding it all off, 'Land of Hope and Glory'.

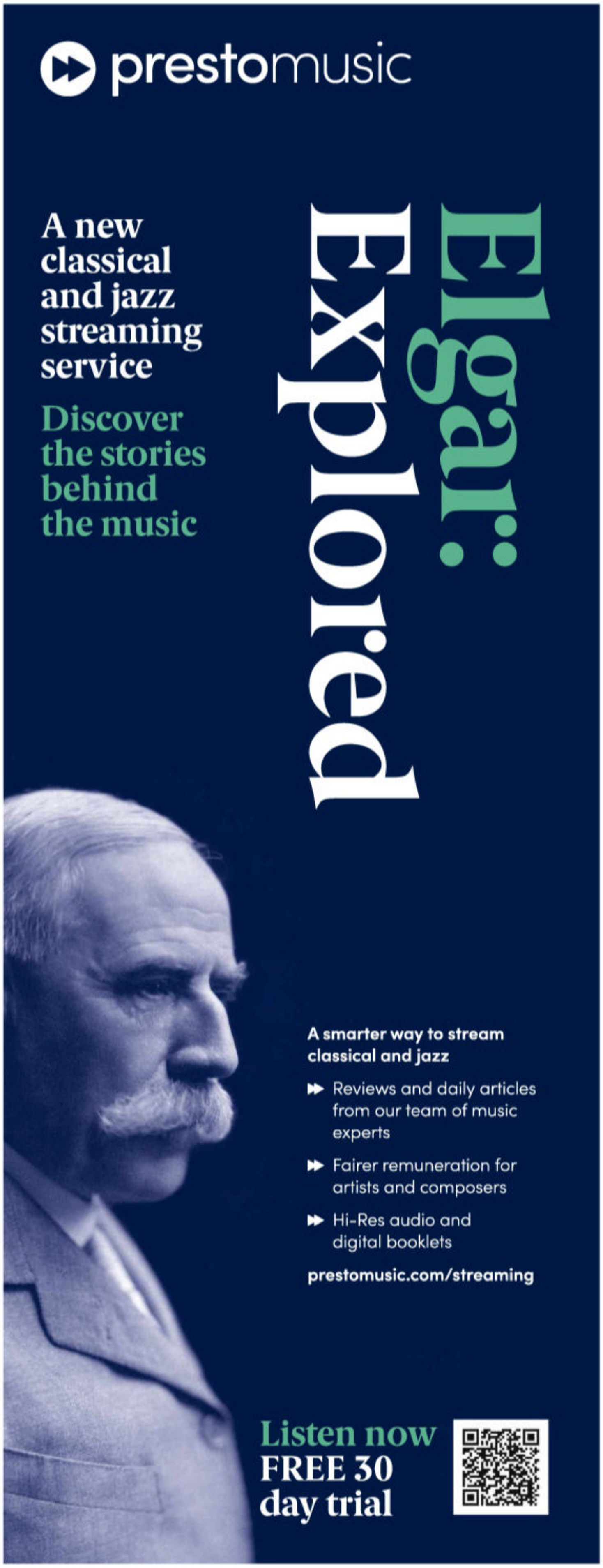
'I was lucky to be able to work with composer Tom Hunt,' Dujardin tells *BBC Music*. 'It always starts with working out a routine to suit the horse and what I feel would work best, but I knew that competing in front of a home crowd at the Olympics would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, so it felt only natural to be as patriotic and sentimental as possible! We worked hard to adapt both routine and music to what I had in my mind, but it is thanks to Tom's talent that we could pull everything seamlessly together.'

And did Valegro himself like the music? 'Horses are incredibly sensitive souls, and I do believe they understand what's being asked of them, whether that be music, rhythm and also when the big moments come around. Blueberry [the stable name for Valegro] is such a performer and he absolutely blossomed under the atmosphere.'

2014 From bow to snow

Skier Vanessa Vanakorn could only ever dream of grabbing a medal in the giant slalom at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. As it was, she came 67th, last out of all those who successfully made it down the course twice and some 50 seconds behind the winner. Nonetheless, even that was no little achievement for Vanakorn, whom most people knew better as the British-Singaporean violinist Vanessa-Mae.

Having racked up a fortune from a young age with recordings ranging from Beethoven to Donna Summer, Mae revealed in her 30s that her next big ambition was to represent Thailand, her father's birth country, on the snowy slopes – with Olympic rules allowing every country to enter at least one competitor into the giant slalom, Thailand's lack of skiers of note afforded her a clear path to doing so. 'With my limited experience at my age I'm happy I made it down,' she reflected afterwards. 'It was kind of rock and roll because I nearly crashed out three times.'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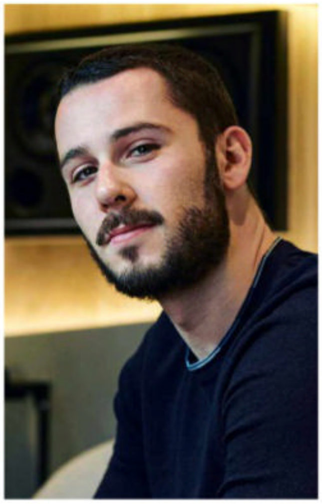
Pride and joy

As the second Classical Pride festival takes over the Barbican, Claire Jackson speaks to founder Oliver Zeffman about supporting the LGBTQ+ community

The pianists – partners both on and off stage – pirouetted through Poulenc's Concerto for Two Pianos, the instruments nestled together among the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Pavel Kolesnikov's off-beat staccato phrases melded with Samson Tsoy's ascending motif; acerbic interjections shifted into poignant lyricism. It followed on from the catchy overture to Bernstein's *Candide*, which featured alongside the premiere of Julian Anderson's *Echoes*, with bass-baritone Davóne Tines as the soloist. 'It was a classic Barbican concert in many ways,' recalls conductor Oliver Zeffman of last year's performance. Indeed it was – except there were rainbow-coloured drapes behind the ensemble, the stage lights winked a bright shade of pink, and there was a greater proliferation of glitter. This was Classical Pride, the first event of its kind in the UK – and, remarkably, Europe.

Given the popularity of Pride – now an annual summer celebration of LGBTQ+ culture, having developed from the first rally held in London in 1972 – it came as a surprise to learn that there wasn't obvious classical music representation. Even Sainsbury's and Marmite have rainbow-coloured logos. Zeffman seized the opportunity, curating a concert and recording a new version of Caroline Shaw's *Is a Rose* – the three-piece song cycle, originally composed for mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter is reimagined on the recording for baritone, soprano and tenor, sung by Tines, Ella Taylor and Nicky Spence.



MATTHEW JOHNSON, SEBASTIAN NEVOLS, SIMON PEPPER

> 'A lot of the drag queens have backgrounds in classical music. There's a huge amount of shared DNA between drag and opera'

'I wanted the different voice types to represent the diversity of Pride,' says Zeffman. There'll be an even broader range of styles on display this year: the first Classical Pride was so successful that it is now expanding to five shows held across five days (3-7 July). At a time where arts funding is more challenging than ever, Zeffman has achieved the unachievable: sponsors have quadrupled their commitment to the project.

Zeffman is keen to continue his series of firsts. The festival opens with Classical Drag, an event that combines drag queens and opera. 'A lot of the drag queens have backgrounds in classical music,' says Zeffman, referring to saxophone-playing Snow White Trash, self-styled as 'the UK's saxiest drag queen' and Thorgy Thor, 'Queen of Classical Music' on reality TV show *RuPaul's Drag Race*. From the opera side, lyric soprano Pumeza Matshikiza and *Is a Rose* soloist

Rainbow celebration: (clockwise from main) Pavel Kolesnikov and partner Samson Tsoy perform Poulenc at last year's Classical Pride; Thorgy Thor; Snow White Trash; Caroline Shaw's *Is a Rose* album; conductor and founder Oliver Zeffman

Spence will be making special appearances, and the lip-sync showdown – where drag queens mime to recordings – will be operatically themed. 'There's a huge amount of shared DNA between drag and opera,' says Zeffman. Travesti roles, such as Cherubino in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and Octavian in Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* have long seen women dressed as men, and castrati or countertenor roles are often gender fluid. Historically, part of the thrill of a trouser role was the forbidden love between same-sex couples, expressed in powerful music such as the love scenes between Octavian and Marschallin (and Sophie) in *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Voice types are no longer inextricably linked with gender. 'Mixed voice' choirs rather than

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Feel-good factor: the stars of last year's Pride (below) Isobel Waller-Bridge has written a new work for Pride

SATB are encouraged in schools, as it's more inclusive for boys whose voices are changing, people who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth and those who don't have an 'appropriate' voice for their appearance. It's a frontier being explored on stage by transgender singers like baritone Lucia Lucas, who recently sung the lead in Tom W Green's 2017 *The World's Wife* based on Carol Ann Duffy's collection of poems under the same title (1999). The theme is also covered by Laura Kaminsky in her opera *As One*, which splits voices as 'Hannah Before' (baritone) and 'Hannah After' (mezzo-soprano).

LGBT+ History Month was set up in the UK in 2004, with a clear objective to ensure that institutions 'do not lie about LGBT people by omission' ('Queer Talk: Homosexuality in Britten's Britain'). Since then, listicles such as '15 LGBTQ+ composers in classical music history that you probably already know' or 'top ten gay composers' are commonplace. But is identifying musicians in this way helpful? Music is clearly more than the composer or performer's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and there's an argument against outing those who were notoriously private about their personal lives. Finally, with February dedicated to LGBT+ History and June to Pride, surely we're... OK?

MATTHEW JOHNSON, JEROME FAVRE

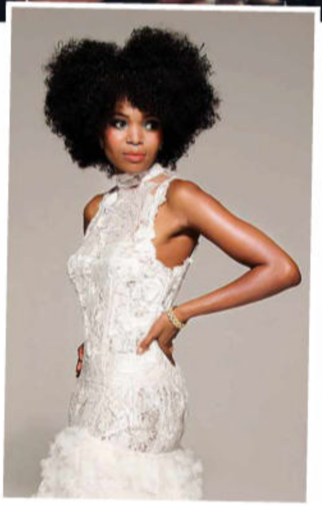
> The Western classical music industry is largely welcoming. But that's not true everywhere in the world

'Yes, if you are a gay man living in the West, life is, generally speaking, fine,' agrees Zeffman, 'You can hold your partner's hand in public, you can get married, you can have a baby. In terms of classical music, the industry is largely welcoming. But that's not true around the world; and in some places gay rights are even regressing.' One example is Uganda, where the Anti-Homosexuality Act passed in 2023 restricts freedom of speech on LGBTQ+ rights and enforces life imprisonment, and even the death penalty, for engaging in same-sex relationships.

It's one of several countries where Rainbow Railroad operates, helping refugees escape state persecution. The charity is among Classical Pride's partner organisations (all net proceeds are donated to Rainbow Road, Amplifund and the Terrence Higgins Trust) and one recipient of its support has written a text that has been set by Isobel Waller-Bridge, to be premiered at the festival. Back in the UK, the rate of progress is not universal for all within the LGBTQ+ community: trans rights are currently in flux. At last year's Classical Pride, I witnessed one member of the team being misgendered on multiple occasions during rehearsals. It hit hard: if we can't get this right at an event with LGBTQ+ culture at its heart, imagine the experiences

Standing up for equality: Jamie Barton at the Proms

Singing out: Davóne Tines and Zeffman in Julian Anderson's *Echoes*; (below) soprano Pumeza Matshikiza performs this year



Flying the flag

Pride at the Proms

Flag-waving and the Proms go together like a horse and carriage. Traditionally, it was a Union flag that most people clutched, raising colours to the air for the now-contested 'Rule, Britannia!' sing-a-long, a tradition born out of the Second World War.

Then, as the festival became more international, other flags began to appear, decorating the red, blue and white with splodges of yellow, black and green, among others. The red, blue and white fractured into its original component parts: white and blue; red and white, and, especially when Bryn Terfel sung in 2008, there be dragons too. The yellow-starred blue has featured more prominently in recent years, particularly since 2016, with certain factions even handing out their preferred flag to audience members to sway the overall colourway.

But it wasn't until 2019 that the Pride flag was used on stage – unfurled by Jamie Barton during the usual Last Night festivities. The US mezzo-soprano made a historic moment for Pride in classical music when she starred as the soloist in the closing Prom. At one point dressed in purple and pink – matching the bisexual flag of the same colours – Barton sung Bizet, Saint-Saëns and, fittingly, 'Over the Rainbow'.

MATTHEW JOHNSON, BBC/CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU

in more conservative settings. 'To be frank, it's naïve to think that this issue doesn't affect classical music,' says Zeffman. 'Pride has always been a protest movement, and while Classical Pride is a celebration, we want to emphasise the importance of LGBTQ+ rights.'

It's worth remembering that it was as recently as 1967 that 'homosexual acts in private between men over the age of 21' was decriminalised in England and Wales; Scotland would have to wait until 1980, and a further two years for Northern Ireland. It wasn't until 2000 that you could 'officially' be gay in the armed forces. That's before we've got to what was deemed domestically acceptable: same sex marriage only became legal in 2014 in England, Wales and Scotland, progressing on from the 2004 Civil Partnership Act. Many of the composers featured in this year's Classical Pride have reflected the impact of this inequality in their work, such as Britten, whose *Canticle I* with the subtitle 'My beloved is mine and I am his' was quietly radical in 1947. 'My Beloved Man', performed by the Fourth Choir, uses the letters between Britten and Pears (read by Petroc Trelawny) interspersed with music by Purcell, Barber, Tippett, Imogen Holst and others, to track the couple's life together. More explicit is Julius Eastman's *Gay Guerilla*, one of the more printable titles that reference the composer's struggles and satisfaction in being a black gay composer. (In an interview with *Buffalo News*, Eastman explained his mission: 'What I am trying to achieve is to be what I am to the fullest – black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, a homosexual to the fullest'.) A new arrangement of the piece by Jessie Montgomery will be performed at the Barbican foyer (7 July, free).

Nearly a year before the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra sanctioned phone use in its concerts, Classical Pride had already – unintentionally, perhaps – endorsed a more relaxed approach to the usual concert etiquette. The rainbow light projections behind performers appeared on screens dotted around the Barbican. News spread, and so too are similar events, such as Pride Classical, which took place (3 June) at the Blackpool Tower Ballroom, hosted by Radio 1 DJ Danny Beard. The event featured a new Pride anthem created by members of Stockport LGBT+ PLUS Spectrum, alongside orchestral versions of disco hits – also the premise of the upcoming Everybody Dance! The Sound of Disco Prom which, while not openly a LGBTQ+ celebration, uses music closely associated with the movement: Gloria Gaynor, Diana Ross et al. 'Queer culture is increasingly important in mainstream culture,' concludes Zeffman. 'We're engaging new audiences – supporting LGBT+ is good for classical music.'

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Roger and out...

As he prepares for his final season heading Britten Pears Arts, Roger Wright speaks to Clare Stevens about a career dedicated to bringing artists and audiences together

> ‘You are only as good as the work you do, the people you work with, and the audiences you serve’

How to sum up Roger Wright CBE’s 10 years at the helm of what is now Britten Pears Arts (BPA), the Suffolk-based charity that embraces Aldeburgh Festival, Snape Maltings Concert Hall and the Red House, former home of composer Benjamin Britten and singer Peter Pears? One of Wright’s senior colleagues responds succinctly: ‘Roger kicked open the doors’.

A local conductor concurs, explaining that over the past decade, but particularly in response to the pandemic, BPA has made it possible for regional choral societies and youth music groups to use the world-class facilities at Snape in a way that they couldn’t before, through favourable hire charges and sometimes free access to rehearsal spaces. More locally based contractors have been engaged, whether as music leaders or as suppliers for the site’s many retail outlets. When East Anglia’s only professional chamber orchestra, the Britten Sinfonia, suddenly lost all its Arts Council England funding, BPA stepped in to discuss ways to increase its work with them.

Attending a Celebration 24 young musicians’ showcase at the Maltings in Wright’s company, I saw for myself his rapport with colleagues, from members of the organisation’s management team to volunteer stewards. He admits himself that his ability to make people laugh at a bad joke has been an asset in his distinguished career; but his flippant sense of humour disguises a vast knowledge of classical music and a deep seriousness about the importance of enabling everyone to access great art, whether that be on the doorstep or via the airwaves listening to broadcast concerts and recordings on Radio 3, of which he was controller from 1998-2014.

For the final seven of those years Wright was also director of the BBC Proms, and previous senior roles included artistic administrator of the Cleveland Orchestra and five years in Hamburg with Deutsche Grammophon. When he was appointed as chief executive of what was then called Aldeburgh Music, he imagined it would be his last big job before retirement; little did he know quite how big it would turn out to be. Within a week of his arrival, the Gooderham family, original owners of the Snape Maltings site, announced their decision to put their remaining share of the sprawling complex up for sale. Aldeburgh Music negotiated to purchase it, with the help of Arts Council England. So, the chief executive’s remit now extended beyond the creative campus, which hosts performances and courses year-round as well as the famous festival, plus shops and residential accommodation.

Man of the people: (left) Britten Pears Arts head Roger Wright; (far left) Britten in Aldeburgh with librettist Eric Crozier in 1949; (below) Britten Studio at Snape Maltings

Then in 2020, Snape Maltings merged with the Britten-Pears Foundation, which looked after the two musicians' estate, bringing the Red House and the hugely important Britten Pears Archive in its sophisticated new building under the same umbrella as the concert hall and the Young Artist Programme which they founded, inspired by the examples of Dartington in England and Tanglewood in the US.

'The opportunity to put the two bits of the Britten-Pears legacy back together was something that we thought would probably happen eventually, but not in our lifetimes,' Wright says, adding that together with the purchase of the additional buildings on the Maltings site, it has transformed the organisation in a way that he certainly didn't think was possible back in 2014. Asked if the responsibilities of negotiating these changes meant that he wasn't able to devote as much time to planning the festival and concert hall programme, however, he is quick to credit his board and senior team for ensuring that he never had to take his eye off the artistic ball.

'You are only ever as good as the work you do, the things you put on, the people with whom you do the work and the people you serve,' he asserts, 'and that comes back to Benjamin Britten's vision of music being useful to society. That vision is the thing, ultimately, against which we test ourselves. We are constantly asking, "What's the need?", "How useful is this?", and checking that we always give music the opportunity to transform people's lives – whether that's live chamber music at Jubilee Hall in Aldeburgh town centre by one of our young ensembles in residence; or in our work in the community with people suffering from dementia or Parkinson's; the work we do at our local prison; or our schools music week that has seen 1,200 kids and their families coming through the doors.'

Each of those school concerts, he adds, culminated in a performance by all the participants of a specially commissioned song by composer Jessie Maryon Davies, 'We are here', written in collaboration with four schools and two music groups across Suffolk. Although they all ended up singing the same song, it sounded different every night, because each group of performers was different, 'a sort of *Noye's Fludde*, but fit for purpose now, made for the community in which we live, [but still reflecting] what Britten and Pears knew music could do in bringing communities together.'

Listening to Wright enthusing about the variety of musical activity that goes on in and

DAN NICKELLS, PHILIP VILE, GETTY

Aldeburgh Festival

7-23 June 2024

The festival celebrates its 75th birthday with a focus on its rich heritage. Co-founders Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears are celebrated in a new exhibition, 'The Composer's Place', at their Red House.

Four musicians – violinist Daniel Pioro, cellist Alban Gerhardt and composers Unsuk Chin and Judith Weir – form a backbone of the performance calendar. It opens with Weir's opera *Blond Eckbert* staged by English Touring Opera, and her music features in ten other concerts. Gerhardt recreates – with pianist Steven Osborne – the recital given by Rostropovich and Britten in 1961, and performs concertos by Elgar and Unsuk Chin. The first Aldeburgh Festival concert from 5 June 1948 is also recreated in a performance by Britten Sinfonia. Pioro features in seven concerts, including a collaboration with The Marian Consort and a performance of Britten's Violin Concerto.

Among the other highlights is a new staging of Britten's church parable *Curlew River*, 60 years after its first performance, as well as a chance to see *Sumidagawa*, the Japanese Noh play that inspired it, performed by leading Japanese artists. *Full info: brittenpearsarts.org*

BEN EALOVEGA, DAN NICKELS, SIM CANETTY-CLARKE

One more for the road: Wright's final Aldeburgh Festival features works and performances by (far left) Judith Weir and Alban Gerhardt; (left) retirement is not on the cards just yet – though a first summer off in decades has an appeal

around Aldeburgh, I'm reminded of how he took a similar approach, albeit on a much smaller scale, to his first full-time job after graduating from Royal Holloway College, University of London, as librarian/manager and then director of the British Music Information Centre (BMIC) in London, opening the doors of a rather dour building in a cul-de-sac off Oxford Street and turning its elegant drawing room into a concert space where contemporary music could be showcased, and forging mutually beneficial relationships with composers and performers.

> 'If the audience knows that you care, you can take them to so many different places'

Did Wright imagine then that he would go on to the artistic leadership of so many prestigious organisations? 'No,' he replies emphatically. 'I always imagined that I would be doing any job that I was doing, either until the day after, or for the rest of my life – or anything in between. The one thing that has connected all of the things that I've been lucky enough to do is that I've been passionate about them all, I've enjoyed them all, and feel privileged to do them all.'

He counts himself lucky to have worked with inspirational figures, including the trustees and administrators who gave him opportunities, as well as so many of the world's leading musicians, in particular the composer-conductors Oliver Knussen and Pierre Boulez. 'They've been real friendships and I miss them as much now as I did when they passed. You learn so much from spending time with people like them.

'The other thing I've noticed in all my roles,' he adds, 'is that we should be glad when audiences and communities feel close enough to an organisation to feel a sense of ownership – and quite properly, at Radio 3 and the Proms as licence-fee payers they should feel a sense of ownership.' Wright's press cuttings file is full of accounts of listeners' discontent when he programmed the music of Frank Zappa, or moved *Composer of the Week* from 9am to noon… exactly the sort of criticism that current controller Sam Jackson is facing for daring to rearrange the scheduling furniture.

There's a similar loyalty in Aldeburgh where, Wright explains, 'people feel completely tied to this world and the heritage. But if you can show them that you care about the same things, and they feel close to you, you can take an audience to different places. You can ask them to get up at four o'clock in the morning to hear Pierre-Laurent Aimard play the complete Messiaen *Catalogue d'Oiseaux* at a series of locations, the last performance taking place at 11 at night; or say, "We're going to play you all the Helmut Lachenmann string quartets in one day. Are you up for it?" And the audience goes, "Yes of course, fine." Sure, they'll fall lovingly into the arms of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* in Blythburgh Church, or the Mozart Clarinet Quintet, or Britten's *Curlew River,* because this audience is no different in its love of familiar repertoire… but when they trust you, you can take them somewhere new. That's where it comes back to brand health; they trust the brand of the Aldeburgh Festival. We're presenting more than 25 first performances again this year, and our ticket sales are stronger than they've ever been.'

Typically considerate, Wright gave BPA a year's notice of his intention to step down at the end of this year's festival. His successor, Andrew Comben, comes from a similar role in Brighton, so the transition should be smooth. When he finally hands over his keys to all those beautiful Suffolk buildings in July, Wright says he plans to enjoy his first summer off for many decades; but he insists that he is not heading for retirement yet. He admits he has already turned down some job offers, but says, 'At some point I will start saying yes to things.

'What those are, where they might be, who knows, but there are still things to be fought for, sadly, and let's paraphrase Britten: wherever I can be useful, genuinely useful, as opposed to just thinking that I might be, then that's what I want to be engaged with, and I hope that I'm still on the endless journey of discovery.'

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Photo: Sorin Cucui

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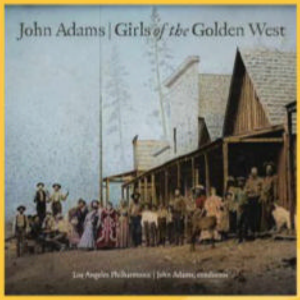

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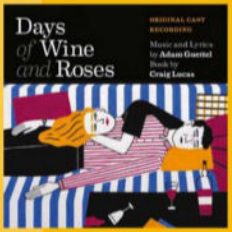

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Newport, Rhode Island US

Despite its reputation for outlandish wealth, Newport today is home to bold premieres and community concerts, finds *Charlotte Smith*

Smiling line-up: Newport's 2023 Festival Artists take a bow

The sun hangs low over the ocean as the sky turns a delicate shade of peach. Walking over a sumptuous, immaculately kept lawn down to the water's edge, I look back at what can only be described as the stateliest of mansions – with its Greek-style pillars, expansive veranda and Juliet balconies. Inside the ostentatious marble entrance, a deep-red carpet lines an enormous staircase and heavy chandeliers hang from gargantuan brass chains. This is The Breakers in Newport, Rhode Island – improbably termed a 'cottage' by its original owners, the New York Vanderbilt family.

Newport is chock full of such 'cottages', built by America's wealthiest families as summer homes during the Gilded Age of the late-19th century. The beautiful seaside destination was the perfect spot for New York's Fifth Avenue set to escape from the sweltering inland heat, and although these families spent just a few months each year in Newport, their summer homes were equipped with every mod con and luxury. Think Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence,* whose high society cast of characters inhabits this world.

These days, Newport is still very much a holiday destination. Its harbours are lined with elegant yachts and sailboats, throngs of tourists walk among its generous range of shop, and any number of restaurants offer the region's delicious lobster roll – though for freshly caught fare you can't get better than the Newport Lobster Shack, whose unassuming exterior belies the quality of its food. For those with an interest in sport, the town

Lap of luxury: (above) The Breakers 'cottage'; (right) lobster roll in Newport harbour; (below) pianist Hélène Grimaud performs in 2023

Whale of a time: JFK with John Jr. in Newport, 1963

Political connections

Fit for a president

Newport's first presidential visit took place in August 1790, when George Washington was accompanied by secretary of state Thomas Jefferson to celebrate Rhode Island's ratification of the US Constitution.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis spent her childhood summers at Newport's Hammersmith Farm and married then-senator John F Kennedy at nearby St Mary's Church in 1953. The Kennedys were prominent members of Newport Society and frequently attended balls on Bellevue Avenue.

Both Presidents Kennedy and Eisenhower made Newport their Summer White Houses. Eisenhower's Fort Adams home from 1957-60 is now called Eisenhower House.

has also hosted the International Tennis Hall of Fame since 1954, and the National Sailing Hall of Fame since 2019 – and the Newport Country Club was the site of golf's first US Open in 1895.

Thanks to the Newport Preservation Society, 11 of the town's cottages and gardens have been preserved as museums, complete with original furniture and finishings. These mansions also host year-round events staged by Newport Classical, founded in 1969 as the Rhode Island Arts Foundation – including an annual Music Festival in July, a year-long Chamber Series, free community concerts and an extensive Education and Engagement programme involving local schoolchildren.

Under the relatively recent leadership of executive director Gillian Friedman Fox, former director of Contemporary Programs for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Music Festival now commissions new music annually, while also honouring its more than 50-year legacy. Thus far, Fox has been very successful in commissioning works with ties to the community – a case in point was 2023's world premiere, a piano quintet titled 'The Gilded Age' by Grammy-nominated violinist and composer Curtis Stewart, who coincidentally spent some years growing up in Newport and whose piece draws on the stories of those who worked at The Breakers.

'We want to commission new works, support living composers and to be a part of the narrative of the future of classical music,' Fox told me. 'That's something that is incredibly important to me and I think should be important to all classical music organisations. We can't just look backwards but instead should embrace the future of the artform.'

The 2023 edition, which I attended in July, was exciting and dynamic. On my first evening at The Breakers, former Tchaikovsky Competition winner Zlatomir Fung treated us to fleet-footed accounts of the complete Bach Cello

> 'We can't just look backwards, but should embrace the future of the artform'

Suites, performed from memory with spoken introductions. The next morning, I headed to another cottage, The Elms, for 'Classical Rivalries', a highly energetic performed and spoken account of the 'famous feud' between Brahms and Liszt, featuring 2023's Festival Artists – young musicians at the outset of their careers brought together annually by Newport

Classical for an intense three-week period of music-making. But it wasn't all about the youngsters: there were also headline performances by pianist Hélène Grimaud in Brahms and Bach/Busoni – treading an astonishing line between passion and elegance – and by violinist Eldbjørg Hemsing in enchanting Norwegian trifles alongside Ravel's epic *Tzigane*.

It all pointed to a thriving musical community, generously supported by locals whose love of the arts equals their pride in the town's elegant past. And with Fox's bold new refresh, the next 50 years of Newport Classical look set to equal the success of the last.

The 2024 Newport Classical Music Festival runs from 4-21 July, and features Sphinx Virtuosi, Chanticleer, pianist Joyce Yang, violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, the Lincoln Trio, PUBLIQuartet, and Sō Percussion with Caroline Shaw.

Further info: newportclassical.org

GETTY, LISETTE ROONEY

Composer of the Week is broadcast on Radio 3 at 4pm, Monday to Friday. Programmes in July are:
1-5 July Richard Strauss
8-12 July Thomas Linley the Younger
15-19 July Revueltas
22-26 July Robert Schumann
29 July – 2 Aug Ethel Smyth

Elizabeth Maconchy

Though admired by her peers and feted in her younger years, Maconchy faced an uphill battle for wider recognition, as ***Leah Broad*** explains

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

GETTY

Maconchy's style

Impassioned argument Maconchy said that 'passionately intellectual and intellectually passionate discourse is what I seek, however inadequately, to express in music'.

Rhythm The vitality of Maconchy's music comes partly from her rhythmic innovation. She was particularly influenced in this respect by Bartók (above). She viewed his work as 'a revelation — it seems to open up a new world of rhythm, harmony, everything; and to release a sort of spring inside me that had not been touched before.'

Concision Maconchy was a ruthless perfectionist, constantly revising her works and withdrawing those she considered not to meet her high standards. Those that passed scrutiny are remarkable for their succinct means of expression. There is no melodrama in Maconchy's music.

Strings 'Writing for strings,' Maconchy professed, 'has always been what I have most enjoyed', and many of her most striking works are for strings. She said of string quartets that 'one is dealing with the very bones of music … so everything extraneous to the pursuit of the central idea must be excluded – scrapped.'

'For me,' Elizabeth Maconchy confessed, 'a musical argument must always be an impassioned one.' Passion, debate, argumentation, 'sensitive and moving musical logic' – these were the elements that Maconchy believed made 'true music'. Every single one of her works is alive with what she called 'intellectual passion', from the thundering rhythms of her 1929 orchestral work *The Land* to the taught, concise abstraction of her last string quartet, the 'Quartetto Corto' of 1982-3.

Born in 1907 to Irish parents, Maconchy was one of the most significant composers working in Britain and Ireland during the 20th century. Her works include operas, ballets, concertos, choral works, orchestral pieces, chamber works, songs and a monumental series of 13 string quartets, earning her relatively consistent recognition as one of the foremost composers of the day. She was elected chair of the Composers' Guild in 1959, served as president of the Society for the Promotion of New Music and was awarded first a CBE in 1977 and then a DBE in 1987, making her only the second woman after Ethel Smyth to become a Dame for composition.

Yet her career is a story of two halves. Despite these laurels, her music was never quite given the recognition it deserved. Throughout her life she was frustrated by a lack of performances, particularly on the BBC which was so important for building composers' reputations. In the 1950s she received very few broadcasts at all, and even at the peak of her career her BBC presence was paltry when compared to composers of a similar stature. In the 1960s, she had around six works broadcast a year – Britten had 152 in 1961 alone.

Undoubtedly, much of this sidelining had to do with gender. Maconchy battled prejudice throughout her career, whether in the form of overtly sexist criticism (one of her detractors, Constant Lambert, complained about her being 'determined not to allow feminine charm' into her music), or the more insidious problem of being passed over for opportunities because she was a woman. On missing out on a scholarship to study abroad in 1929, for example, she was told that had they given it to her she would 'have only got married and never written another note'.

Every single one of Maconchy's works is alive with what she called 'intellectual passion'

Besides this, though, Maconchy's style sat uncomfortably in the shifting landscape of 20th-century music. In the 1930s, her uncompromising sound that pushed at the boundaries of tonality placed her at the forefront of British modernism. Her technically challenging music made significant demands of performers, meaning that when her pieces did get performed, the results were extremely variable, especially when there was insufficient rehearsal time. She earned an off-putting reputation as a 'difficult modern', as one of her contemporaries put it – not helped by her dedicating particular attention to chamber music, considered one of the more cerebral and inaccessible genres.

PICTURE
POST
God Save the Queen

Family and friends: (far left) Maconchy in 1987 with her daughter Nicola LeFanu, also a composer; (left) Grace Williams, a lifelong support

Maconchy may have been avant-garde in the 1930s, but by the '60s her style sounded old-fashioned against the serial and electronic music dominating the contemporary music scene. Neither of these avenues held much interest for her. Electronic music she found 'depressing on the whole', and although she experimented with 12-tone composition, she felt sure that it was not 'the answer to the music of the future'. She continued to forge her own path, even if it meant being seen as unpopular or unfashionable.

Like so many women who had successful compositional careers in 20th-century Britain, Maconchy studied at the Royal College of Music. She had the good fortune to be in the same cohort as fellow composers Grace Williams, Dorothy Gow, Imogen Holst and Elisabeth Lutyens, among whom she found a supportive and stimulating creative community. Williams, in particular, would become one of Maconchy's closest lifelong friends. The two valued one another for their honesty and their unfailing belief in each other's music. Always self-critical and exacting, Maconchy turned to Williams both for encouragement and for critical feedback. Williams proved the perfect sounding board, unafraid to say when a movement sounded too 'abrupt and unprepared', but ready to congratulate her on works she thought 'brilliant'. Williams also advocated for Maconchy's music behind the scenes, fighting for it to be played by BBC orchestras because 'there is more sense of beauty in her little finger than there is in lots & lots of contemporary composers put together'.

'Push on,' Vaughan Williams wrote to her. 'One day the key might turn in the lock'

Maconchy's composition teacher, Vaughan Williams, was another prominent champion. His tuition had been transformative for her. 'It was a whole new world when I became a pupil of his,' she later reflected. 'He was a tremendously inspiring person.' Vaughan Williams believed wholeheartedly in her abilities, recommended her music whenever he could, and when she became disillusioned by the lack of attention to her music, he was there to reassure. 'Push on,' he wrote. 'One day perhaps the key will turn in the lock.' It was also on his suggestion that Maconchy travelled to Prague to further her studies in 1929. Her Piano Concerto was premiered there to great acclaim in 1930, hailed by the Czech press as a work of 'remarkable creative genius'.

Success abroad helped Maconchy to get a foothold in Britain too. Her four-movement orchestral suite *The Land*, based on Vita Sackville-West's poem of the same name, premiered at the 1930 BBC Proms. Each movement depicts a season, opening with an ominous rumble in the bass strings to evoke the sparseness of winter and closing with a raucous, energetic, almost aggressive paean to autumn, full of virtuosic brass writing and pulsing rhythms that harbour echoes of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. The *Daily Telegraph* considered it 'by far the most important and interesting work' in the season. Her 'really outstanding' String Quartet No. 1 followed in 1933, 'full of vigour, soundly and clearly constructed, and possessing a kind of burning originality', according to *Music Lover,* while her String Quartet No. 2 (1936) was 'taut and passionate' (*Daily Telegraph*) and 'alive with imagination' (*Musical Times*). By the end of the 1930s, when *The Star* surveyed Britain's leading composers, they decided that 'pride of place goes to a girl', placing Maconchy ahead of her peers Lennox Berkeley, Britten and Lutyens.

World War II, however, halted Maconchy's ascent. Not only were musical resources drastically reduced and ensembles gutted by men enlisting, but what few resources remained were channelled into familiar repertoire that needed little rehearsal, and that audiences already knew and loved. Only the most famous and established modern composers could rely on wartime performances. Maconchy continued composing throughout the war, with her most notable wartime works including the ballet *Puck Fair* (1939-40) premiered in Dublin, her *Dialogue for Piano and Orchestra* (1939-41), String Quartet No. 4 (1939-41), Divertimento for Cello and Piano (1941-43), Violin Sonata

GETTY, CLIVE BARDA/ARENA PAL

(1943), and Concertino for Clarinet and String Orchestra (1945). Nonetheless, performances were scarce. 'I get depressed about my work pretty often,' she admitted to Grace Williams in 1943, continuously frustrated by 'lack of stimulus – lack of time – hearing no music'.

The drought continued in the post-war years, but in 1953 her overture *Proud Thames* won a competition to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, and Sir Adrian Boult conducted the premiere at the Royal Festival Hall. This marked something of a turning point. She still had to endure articles expressing amazement that she could 'cook and ... sew and do all that women and a mother of two can find to do about a house – and yet go ahead and carve herself a place in contemporary British music'. But from 1953 the BBC placed her on a list of composers whose works would be accepted for broadcast without first being vetted by a reading panel, and besides her official recognitions she received an increasing number of important commissions.

The masterpieces of Maconchy's later years reflect the full spectrum of her compositional personality. The Symphony for Double String Orchestra (1952-3) recalls some of *The Land*'s ferocity, while the comic opera *The Sofa* (1956-9) shows Maconchy's more mischievous side. With a libretto by Ursula Vaughan Williams, the opera's central character is a man who is transformed into a sofa – and only a couple having sex on the sofa will lift the curse (a scenario that scandalised the first performance's audience). The *Music for Strings* (1981-82) ranges from the 'sombre' to the 'extrovert' and 'happy-go-lucky', in Maconchy's own words, and her opera *The Departure* (1959-61) offers a searing, intense reflection on 'the emotional history of a woman's life' from youth through to death.

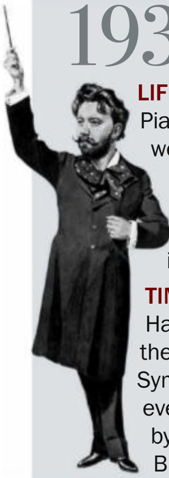
The expressive power of Maconchy's music is extraordinary. No matter what medium she wrote in, her voice is distinctive, unique and compelling. Perhaps it is only now, with some distance from the polarised debates about modernism that dominated the 20th century, that her remarkable music can truly be appreciated on its own terms.

MACONCHY Life & Times

1907

LIFE: Elizabeth Maconchy is born on 19 March in ***Broxbourne***, Hertfordshire. Her parents are both Irish, and the family later move to Howth, close to Dublin on the east coast of Ireland.

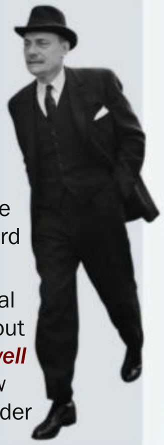
TIMES: Edward VII opens the new Old Bailey criminal court building in London, its dome adorned by *Lady Justice*, a bronze sword-wielding sculpture.



1930

LIFE: In the same year that her Piano Concerto receives its world premiere in Prague, her orchestral suite *The Land* enjoys great acclaim when ***Sir Henry Wood*** conducts it at the BBC Proms.

TIMES: At London's Queen's Hall, Adrian Boult conducts the recently founded BBC Symphony Orchestra in its first ever concert, featuring works by Wagner, Saint-Saëns, Brahms and Ravel.



1968

LIFE: Her Aristophanes-inspired opera *The Birds*, one of a number of pieces that she composes for children, is performed for the first time at Bishop's Stortford College for Boys.

TIMES: After his controversial 'Rivers of Blood' speech about immigration, MP ***Enoch Powell*** is removed from the Shadow Cabinet by Conservative leader Edward Heath.

1994

LIFE: Seven years after receiving a Damehood for services to music, she dies in Norwich, aged 87. She is buried in Eaton Parish Church in Norfolk.

TIMES: At a ceremony in Calais on 6 May, Queen Elizabeth II and French president François Mitterrand officially open the Channel Tunnel, six years after tunnelling began.

1947

LIFE: Married since 1930 to ***William LeFanu***, a librarian at the Royal College of Surgeons, she gives birth to their second daughter, Nicola LeFanu, who will also go on to enjoy a career as a composer.

TIMES: An exceptionally harsh winter results firstly in power cuts due to difficulties in transporting coal and then, as the snow melts in March, the most catastrophic flooding of the River Thames for more than 100 years.

1983

LIFE: She composes 'Quartetto Corto', the 13th and last of her string quartets, a series that, begun some half-a-century earlier, she describes as 'my best and most deeply felt works'.

TIMES: ***Jenny Pitman*** becomes the first woman to train a winner of the Grand National when ***Corbiere***, ridden by Ben De Haan, finishes three-quarters of a length ahead of Greasepaint at Aintree.

Antonín Dvořák

Symphony No. 5

Terry Williams **names the best recordings of a symphony packed with the feel-good factor of a composer for whom life was firmly on the up**

The composer

Dvořák described himself as 'just a plain Czech musician' while conductor Hans von Bülow called him 'a peasant in a frock coat'. Both underplayed the genius of a composer who, by the time of his death aged 62 in 1904, enjoyed huge popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, thanks not least to works such his Cello Concerto, the opera *Rusalka* and Symphony No. 9 'From the New World'. After a slow start, a career propelled by the publication of his *Slavonic Dances* (see right) would see him move to a highly paid job in the US in 1892, returning three years later to his Bohemian homeland, where he remained thereafter.

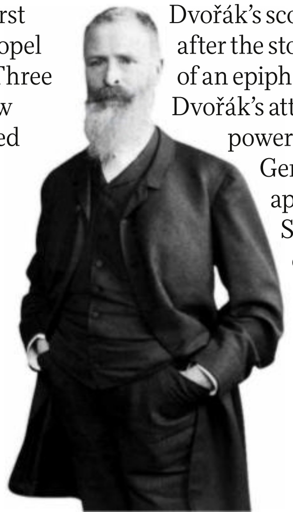
Building a Library is broadcast on Radio 3 at 3.30pm each Saturday as part of *Record Review*. A highlights podcast is available on BBC Sounds.

The work

It never hurts to have friends in high places, and in the case of Antonín Dvořák that friend was Johannes Brahms. It was on the older German composer's advice that, in early 1878, Dvořák sent his *Moravian Duets* for soprano and piano to Brahms's influential, and financially canny, Berlin publisher Fritz Simrock. Knowing a good thing when he saw it, Simrock promptly asked Dvořák to write two books of dances for piano duet in the style of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*. Within two months, eight pieces for four hands were on the publisher's desk, followed soon after by orchestrated versions of both. In this latter form, the *Slavonic Dances* would become a staple diet of orchestras all over the world while – latching onto the boom in popularity of upright pianos in people's homes – sales of the sheet music for the piano original filled Simrock's coffers nicely and made Dvořák a household name.

The consummate tunesmith comes to the fore in the Fifth's *Scherzo*, which radiates sunshine

This was by no means the first time Brahms had helped to propel the Czech composer's career. Three years earlier, he had been a new member of the jury that decided which young creative talents would be the beneficiaries of the annual Austrian State Stipendium, a grant from the Austrian Ministry of Education, to help encourage their artistic endeavours.



Earning a meagre living at the time as an organist at the church of St Adalbert in Prague, and now the recently married parent of a young son, Dvořák was greatly boosted by the 400 gulden that resulted from his successful application, and a flurry of works soon followed. These included his tragic opera *Vanda*, the Piano Trio in B flat major, String Quintet in G major, Serenade for Strings and, perhaps most significantly, his Symphony No. 5, composed in just a couple of months over the summer of 1875.

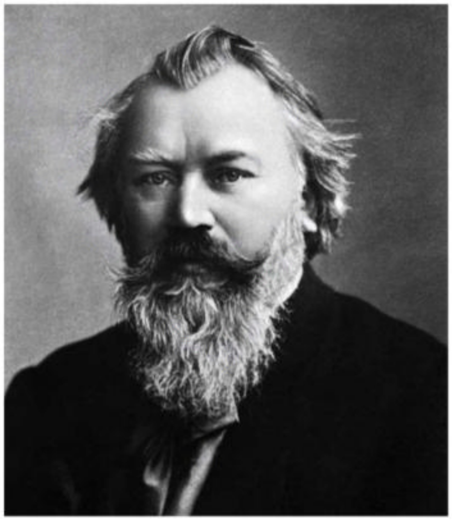
Dvořák's Fifth has been dubbed his 'Pastoral Symphony', and his early biographer Otakar Šourek memorably described its first movement as 'the voice of the rustling woods, the song of the birds, the fragrance of the fields, the strong breath of nature rejoicing and the sense of mortal wellbeing'. However, the symphony is not a paean to nature as is Beethoven's Sixth. There is nothing hymn-like in Dvořák's score, no song of thanks-giving after the storm. Nor is it the equivalent of an epiphany on the road to Damascus. Dvořák's attempt to escape from the powerful influence of the Neo-Germanic school was already apparent in, for example, the Serenade for Strings and much of the Third and Fourth Symphonies, where his deep-rooted nationalist colours are firmly nailed to the mast.

An *Allegro ma non troppo* opens the Fifth with a chirpy clarinet theme, promising a dawn chorus which never arrives. Instead, a stomping bucolic theme muscles its way in, brushing aside – *pace* Šourek – any hint of birdsong. Dvořák apologises for this rude intrusion by supplying a contrasting third theme, heard first on violins, which is so inviting that he is loath to part with it. The frequent brassy outbursts are ebullient, the mood generally upbeat until Dvořák calls time, bringing proceedings to a calm resolution.

Often within a Dvořák slow movement we find a work's dark side – a sudden downpour is possible even on a sunny day – and the *Andante* of the Fifth Symphony is similar to the *Adagio* of the Eighth in this respect. The main theme is melancholic on first appearance, lightens on repetition. The movement's middle section takes the form of a 'Dumka', a Dvořák speciality, when elegiac and lively tempos alternate.

Once calm is restored, the *Andante* comes to rest, followed by a 16-bar bridge passage, virtually a repeat of the *Andante*'s closing pages, before it segues into the *Scherzo*, a rustic dance radiating sunshine. It's an augury of the Ninth Symphony's third movement, complete with triangle embellishment. Dvořák the consummate tunesmith comes to the fore in the Trio section, which luxuriates in a stream of melody. After what seems a reluctant return to the *Scherzo* proper, it's polished off with two dismissive wallops.

GETTY



Out in the open: (above) Dvořák's Fifth Symphony displays 'the strong breath of nature rejoicing and the sense of mortal wellbeing', wrote his biographer; (left) Brahms, who persuaded Dvořák to send his *Morvaian Duets* to the highly influential and astute German publisher Fritz Simrock (opposite)

The *Finale* is an extended Slavonic dance. Like Haydn before him, Dvořák plays with our expectations, appearing not to know when or even how to stop. In the Coda, the symphony's opening motif confidently rings out, bringing Dvořák's Fifth to a jubilant close.

The work enjoyed its first performance in March 1879 at Prague's Zofín concert hall, was revised by the composer in 1887, and published by Simrock the following year. At that point, and against Dvořák's wishes, Simrock gave the Fifth an Opus number of 76 (it should be Op. 24). Ever the savvy marketing man, the publisher knew the value of making something appear brand new, even if it really wasn't...

Turn the page to discover our recommended recordings of Dvořák's Symphony No. 5

Bohemian blood: conductor Karel Šejna had Czech music running through his veins

The best recording

A winningly natural approach

Karel Šejna *(conductor)*
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra
Supraphon SU 1917-2 001

A number of conductors have recorded all nine of Dvořák's symphonies, and several fine Fifths lurk within those complete cycles: the likes of Otmar Suitner, Rafael Kubelík, István Kertész, Witold Rowicki, Libor Pešek and Jiří Bělohlávek are all highly recommendable. And should you be up for a little detective work, Zdeněk Mácal's recordings from his time at the helm of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (1986-95) are difficult to track down but they, too, have a strong following among die-hard collectors.

Frustratingly, Charles Mackerras, one of the greatest champions of Czech music of the late-20th century, never got round to recording Dvořák's Fifth. Nor, surprisingly, did the great Karel Ančerl, chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra from 1950-68 (beware of what might appear to be a recording of the Fifth with the Vienna Symphony from 1962 – this is actually the Ninth, using the old numbering system). However, we do at least have the 1952 recording by Ancerl's immediate Czech Philharmonic predecessor, Karel Šejna – and not only has it stood the test of time, but for many it remains peerless.

Šejna's characteristic Czech woodwinds are a happy reminder of a bygone era

Šejna had the orchestra and its tradition running through his veins – he had played in it as principal double bassist, joining it in 1921 when only 25 years old – and while his international profile was never as high as that of Václav Talich, Kubelík and Ančerl, he left over 70 recordings, at present mostly unavailable. Those he made in the studio for the Supraphon label are now gold dust, none more so than his complete set of the *Slavonic Dances* and this exceptional Dvořák Fifth.

There is a heartfelt honesty which permeates every bar of the Czech Philharmonic's performance under Šejna. Tempos feel perfectly natural, phrasing is exquisite, and those characteristic Czech winds are a happy reminder of a bygone

Three other great recordings

Witold Rowicki (conductor)
Conductors Witold Rowicki and István Kertész recorded complete sets of the Dvořák symphonies with the London Symphony Orchestra that are roughly contemporaneous and both admirable. However, in the Fifth Symphony, Kertész's pioneering 1965 stereo recording just yields to Rowicki's 1967 account, which finds more poetry in the *Andante*, an extra lilt in the *Scherzo* and wins hands down in the *Finale*, a whirlwind of virtuosic orchestral playing. Recorded in pretty good sound quality, it is the highlight of the Pole's Dvořák cycle. *(Decca 478 2296)*

Otmar Suitner (conductor)
The Swiss conductor Otmar Suitner and the Staatskapelle Berlin began their splendid Dvořák cycle with the Fifth Symphony in 1979. Suitner's love of the score is obvious – perfectly sculpted, warmly phrased, gloriously played and with first and second violins divided either side of the conductor (to give that all-important antiphonal effect), his outstanding performance is a revelation. If Karel Šejna's mono sound is an insurmountable drawback for some listeners, this beautifully recorded

account could quite happily take top spot. *(Brilliant Classics 96043)*

Neeme Järvi (conductor)
Neeme Järvi, the amazingly versatile Estonian conductor whose recordings cover a huge range of repertoire, rarely disappoints. Here, he digs deep into his Slavic inner self in a wholly idiomatic realisation of Dvořák's Fifth Symphony. With superb playing from his Royal Scottish National Orchestra forces, Järvi provides plenty of physical excitement while also finding time to relish the symphony's lyricism and local colour. The sound quality of this 1987 recording is rich, deep and wide in typical Chandos Records fashion. *(Chandos CHAN 8552)*

And one to avoid...

When the fledgling Naxos label took off in the 1980s, it bravely decided to tackle the Dvořák symphonies – a laudable but risky move, given the strength of the competition already in the catalogue. With the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra under Stephen Gunzenhauser, the results are perfectly acceptable when it comes to the Fifth – you won't find much wrong. But, when other recordings offer such character, colour, individuality and sheer visceral thrill, this needs to be more than just acceptable. Look elsewhere for a Fifth that really takes wing.

age when the sound of this wonderful orchestra was immediately recognisable. Šejna's opening *Allegro ma non troppo* breathes in the spring air like no other and his *Scherzo* frolics with admirable lightness. Nor is he found wanting when the score calls for gloomier shades or a touch of orchestral oomph.

The music of Dvořák has always been the beating heart of the Czech Philharmonic, and this fabulous recording is ample proof. The mono sound won't impress audiophiles, admittedly, but it possesses enough clarity and warmth to satisfy lovers of great music-making.

A spring in his step: Jakub Hrůša trips lightly in Dvořák and Janáček; (below) Leos Janáček himself

Continue the journey...

We suggest five further works to try after Dvořák's Fifth Symphony

The largely sunny temperament of **Dvořák**'s Fifth Symphony is carried on into his Sixth, composed in the early autumn of 1880. By this stage, however, Dvořák's name was rapidly spreading across Europe thanks to the popularity of his first set of *Slavonic Dances* (Op. 46) and that work's rhythmic drive can aso be enjoyed in the furiant of the Sixth's third-movement *Scherzo*. **(Bamberg Symphony Orchestra/Jakub Hrůša** *Tudor TUD1741*)

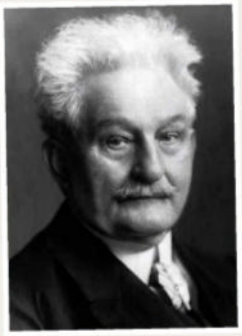
A summer spent at the Austrian holiday resort of Pörtschach in 1877 resulted in **Brahms**'s Second Symphony. In contrast to the First's years-long, tortured genesis, the Second was whittled off in no time at all, and a sense of serenity flows through it, right from the horn calls that introduce the opening *Allegro non troppo*. Though Brahms himself described it – probably mischievously – as 'mournful', its regular nickname of 'The Pastoral' seems entirely appropriate. **(London Philharmonic Orch/ Vladimir Jurowski** *LPO LPO0043*)

Dating from the same year as Dvořák's Fifth is 'From Bohemia's Woods and Fields', the fourth of **Smetana**'s famous *Má vlast* set of six symphonic poems. Complete with a natty little fugue in the middle, the work celebrates the beauty of the Czech landscape before inviting us to a joyful village celebration. **(Czech Philharmonic/ Semyon Bychkov** *Pentatone PTC5187203*)

> While you're up on your feet, have a whirl to Janáček's *Lachian Dances*

One can hear Dvořák's influence, meanwhile, on the earlier music of his pupil **Vítězslav Novák**, a composer who enjoyed nothing more than to get out into the great outdoors of his Czech homeland. A briefly ominous opening to the third movement aside, Novák's Serenade in F major for small orchestra (1895) radiates a feeling of sun-blessed contentment throughout, occasionally breaking into a light-footed dance. **(Ukranian Chamber Orchestra/ Andrew Mogrelia** *Marco Polo 8223649*)

And while you're up on your feet... have a whirl to **Janáček**'s *Lachian Dances* of 1888. One of Janáček's earliest compositions – he was a comparatively late starter – the set is made up of six dances, one of which, 'Dymák', depicts the work of a blacksmith, complete with hammer blows, while the last, 'Pilky', is about a peasant sawing wood in readiness for winter. **(Brno Philharmonic Orchestra/Jakub Hrůša** *Supraphon SU39232*)



Reviews

Recordings and books rated by expert critics

Welcome

There's something magical about that shared moment between performing musicians, coming together to make music. Paul McCreesh's *Dream of Gerontius* (see our 'Recording of the Month', right) is a lovingly produced group effort, and a wonderful example of happy communion in music-making.

Another example, though on a much more intimate scale, is Alexandre Tharaud's album *Four Hands* (see Instrumental Choice, p90), which sees the French pianist invite a plethora of talented friends to share his piano stool for a delightful duo programme. Then there's violinist Rachel Podger, who reunites with longtime friends from Brecon Baroque for a selection of early English chamber works (see Chamber Choice, p86). A friendly selection indeed!

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

John Allison, Nicholas Anderson, Terry Blain, Kate Bolton-Porciatti, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Christopher Dingle, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchen, Rebecca Franks, Andrew Green, George Hall, Claire Jackson, Michael Jameson, Stephen Johnson, Berta Joncus, John-Pierre Joyce, Nicholas Kenyon, Ashutosh Khandekar, Erik Levi, Andrew McGregor, David Nice, Amelia Parker, Freya Parr, Anthony Pryer, Paul Riley, Jan Smaczny, Anne Templer, Jo Talbot, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling, Barry Witherden

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★	Outstanding
★★★★	Excellent
★★★	Good
★★	Disappointing
★	Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

This *Dream* comes to spectacular fruition

Paul McCreesh realises a long-held wish to record Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and does so with an army of talent, says ***Terry Blain***

Elgar

The Dream of Gerontius

Nicky Spence (tenor), Anna Stéphany (mezzo-soprano), Andrew Foster-Williams (bass-baritone); Polish National Youth Choir; Gabrieli Consort, Roar and Players/Paul McCreesh

Signum Classics SIGCD785
95:14 mins (2CD)

This *Gerontius* sounds different from the start, as conductor Paul McCreesh intends it to. The mainly gut strings and delicately toned French woodwind of the Gabrieli orchestra, playing instruments of Elgar's own period, have a less plushly upholstered, more vulnerable sound than usual in the Prelude, with a rawer edge in *tutti*.

This suits Nicky Spence's Gerontius well. His is an anxious, existentially fearful account of the dying protagonist, tremulous and trepidatious at his first entry. Spence can, though, make a searing impact when needed – his 'Take me away,' as The Soul ecstatically enters Purgatory, is a moment of gripping intensity. There's not a line of Newman's text that Spence hasn't considered carefully, and a combination of gleaming tenor tone and spiritual insight makes his a deeply satisfying account.

Bass-baritone Andrew Foster-Williams finds just the right combination of awe and empathy intoning the Priest's 'Proficiscere, anima Christiana', his proclamation sharpened by the rasp of period brass. In Part Two he is an appropriately solemn, firm-toned Angel of the Agony, his delivery prayerful and heartfelt rather than brashly declamatory.

That sense of realistically playing a character in a drama translates also to Anna Stéphany's Angel, whose explanations to the Soul of Gerontius are empathetic and confidential, shorn of the matronly quality some mezzos

Vocal heft and happy horns: Nicky Spence takes the lead; (left) good vibes in the studio

A Dream team: Gabrieli Consort and Gabrieli Roar; (right) Paul McCreesh and producer Nicholas Parker

FRANCES MARSHALL, BEN WRIGHT

deliver. At 'Softly and gently' Stéphany performs the almost impossible task of distilling a moving sense of enfolding tenderness, without resorting to either tonal plumminess or an inappropriate sensuality.

The choir deserves a special mention. One hundred-and-fifty strong, it combines the regular Gabrieli Consort with both the Polish National Youth Choir and Gabrieli Roar, Gabrieli's own training programme for young British singers. It's a tribute to the scrupulous preparation for this recording that the three source choirs combine seamlessly in matters of phrasing and articulation. Their contribution is outstandingly articulate, as cuttingly malevolent in the Demons' chorus – where the period orchestra spits fiery textures – as they are overwhelmingly radiant in the climactic statements of 'Praise to the Holiest in the height'.

As conductor, McCreesh is both unobtrusive and highly effective, unfussily setting

The three choirs combine seamlessly in matters of phrasing and articulation

appropriate tempos and masterfully binding his large forces together in a common purpose. Above all, though, he takes *Gerontius* seriously as music drama. Elgar himself disliked it being described as an 'oratorio', and large sections of McCreesh's performance feel more like an extended operatic *scena*, entirely stripped of sanctimony or a trumped-up aura of religiosity. The cumulative impact is all the more moving for that.

Excellent essays by Stephen Hough and Mahan Esfahani, plus a fascinating discourse by McCreesh on the period instruments his players use, add further to the attractions of this release. The sound, especially in high-resolution format, is excellent. This is unquestionably a great recording of *Gerontius*, one that every Elgarian should have, and ranks high among the many important projects Gabrieli has so far undertaken in its four decades of existence.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Performer's notes
Paul McCreesh

This project has been a long time coming, hasn't it?
It's one I'd wanted to do for many years and in fact we scheduled it twice and cancelled it twice. So this is third time lucky! It has been a labour of love; I knew I had something I wanted to say. Having said that, you're very aware of the dozen-or-so great British conductors who've already recorded it in the most amazing ways over the years, and that weighs heavily on your shoulders.

Why was it important to use period instruments for this?
Why would you not? If you feel that a Baroque oboe works better for Bach then there's a pretty good chance a beautiful 19th-century or early-20th-century oboe will work better for Elgar. And I think that's something we've proved in this recording. We know Elgar was a fantastic orchestrator, but I think you hear things and feel that amazing orchestration even more with these instruments.

It's an incredible performance by the soloists and choirs too...
I worked hard with the choirs to get them to really feel the colours of every chorus as something very different. And I was lucky to be working with three artists who are great lieder singers. We talked a lot about expression of words and texts, and also ways to find the emotional truth behind some quite complicated theological concepts. Gerontius is a notoriously tricky role to cast, and has been sung historically by some very light tenors, through to heavyweight opera stars. Nicky has the operatic heft when you need it, but he also understands words with tremendous subtlety in his artistry. He was a joy.

Orchestral

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

An Enescu symphonic survey worth celebrating

It's a while since a major label has shone a light on this repertoire, and now ***John Allison*** couldn't be happier

Dynamic approach: Cristian Măcelaru captures Enescu's vision perfectly

Enescu

Symphonies Nos 1-3
Orchestre National de France/Cristian Măcelaru
Deutsche Grammophon 486 5505 160:21 mins (3CD)

This first recording of George Enescu's music on DG is something to celebrate. It's indeed a long time since a major label has paid comprehensive attention to Enescu's large-scale works – we have to go back to Lawrence Foster's series for EMI – even though there have always been such testimonies as that of Pablo Casals, who held Enescu to be 'the greatest musical phenomenon since Mozart'. A towering violinist, pianist, conductor and teacher, Enescu spent much of his life in Paris, dying there in exile in 1955; now that the Orchestre National de France is under the music directorship of the dynamic Romanian conductor Cristian Măcelaru, it's a good moment for the French to be reconnecting with him.

Though premiered in Bucharest, Enescu's two early *Romanian Rhapsodies* were composed in Paris. They are deservedly popular, with No. 1 particularly steeped in Romanian dance rhythms that sound freshly inspired here. Predominantly slow and gentle, No. 2 is full of folk inflections – an exoticism and modality marvellously showcased in the orchestral playing and DG's vivid recorded sound.

Other parts of Enescu's output remain under-appreciated, not least the three completed symphonies, which give a good overview of his development as a composer, moving from the early influences of German Romanticism to his later affinity with such voices as Scriabin and Szymanowski. It's quite a journey, as the languorous finale of the Third Symphony demonstrates (its huge forces include organ and chorus), and Măcelaru captures the visionary aspects of the score in an unquestionably important addition to the composer's discography.

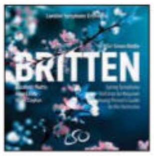
> This is an unquestionably important addition to the composer's discography

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Britten

Spring Symphony; Sinfonia da Requiem; Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra
London Symphony Orchestra/ Simon Rattle et al
LSO Live LSO0830 79:31 mins



There are infinite possibilities in choice of Britten orchestral/ choral works on a single album, and none could be better played and sung, or a better choice to introduce someone to his genius (unless you insist on the *Four Sea Interludes*). The emotional gamut runs from the sombre openings of the two masterpieces which remind us that Britten was a great symphonist – though the *Spring Symphony* is more akin to Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in form – to the joyous finale marrying with 'Sumer is icumen in' and the high jinks of the *Young Person's Guide*, aka *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell*, as perfect an orchestral tour de force as any in the repertoire. I well remember the special exhilaration of this performance when lockdown was finally lifted in mid-May 2021, and re-acquaintance proves it wasn't just the circumstances; Rattle's lift and continuity are utterly bracing, and the LSO acquit themselves with tremendous character.

The same goes for the addition of three perfect soloists and two lusty choirs at the end of the *Spring Symphony*: you sense that this could only be a live performance. Allan Clayton is to our age what Philip Langridge was in the previous era – both more complete than Pears, and the haunting reflection of near-inaudible violin rain in 'Waters above' is unique. Alice Coote proves an ideal successor to Janet Baker, Previn's mezzo in the previous LSO interpretation (EMI). Thanks to the superbly captured high and low frequencies, this *Sinfonia da Requiem* just has the edge on Rattle's CBSO recording.
David Nice

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Bruckner

Symphony No. 9
Bamberg Symphony Orchestra/ Jakub Hrůša
Accentus ACC30605 60:04 mins

If there is such a thing as the ideal Bruckner sound, the Bamberg Symphony must come very close to it. Warm, deep-toned, burnished without being pointlessly luxurious, the orchestra's way with the lyrical second-subject group in the Ninth Symphony's opening movement perfectly balances both the sensual and intellectual appeal of Bruckner's music.

Earlier, in the opening paragraph, Jakub Hrůša and the players allow a touch more prominence than usual to the angular woodwind writing, sowing early indications of perils on the path ahead. Strikingly, Hrůša keeps power aplenty in his pocket for the major climaxes – the movement's tidal-wave conclusion is thrilling – without underplaying lesser peaks of dynamic along the way. There are no cheap thrills in this performance: one is never simply waiting for a bigger, better tutti to blow the previous one away.

The *Scherzo* has bite and crunch while avoiding undue aggression, and the fleet-footed *Trio* again sports tantalising levels of woodwind detail. The finale may divide Brucknerians to some extent. By the apocalyptic standards of a Furtwängler or Jochum it might seem to lack an existentially anguished dimension.

But Hrůša and his wonderfully expressive players discover in the music a calm and compensating certainty that belief in the 'dear God' to whom Bruckner dedicated the Ninth is firmly founded. In the closing bars a quiet sense of joy and assurance predominate. The recorded sound is rich and deep, fully encompassing Hrůša's and the Bamberg Symphony's movingly humane account of this great symphony. *Terry Blain*

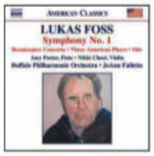
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Foss

Symphony No. 1 etc

Buffalo Philharmonic/JoAnn Falletta

Naxos 8.559938 74:55 mins



Lukas Foss, born Lukas Fuchs in Berlin, arrived in the United States in 1937 when he was 15. Judging by the music he wrote, he very rapidly became an American. Hindemith-style workmanship gave way to the wide open skies of Copland country, the urban rhythms of jazz, and vocal settings swinging between bright Americana and sensuous treatments of biblical texts. Further on, in the 1960s and beyond, improvisation and chance elements became his thing, as did raiding the past for inspiration, delightfully so in the 1985 *Renaissance Concerto* (for flute), marvellous dispatched here by soloist Amy Porter.

The rest of this welcome album concentrates on the polystylist's prolific days in the mid-1940s, when one hymn to America tumbled out after another. The biggest is the Symphony from 1944, a half-hour piece whose structure might wobble but with plenty of compensation from rhythmic verve, playful decorations, and the sense of a gifted 22 year-old flexing his muscles and having a good time. The *Ode*, from the same year, honouring America's war dead, doesn't escape the hot air of bombast; but you can't make that complaint about the chiselled and spry *Three American Pieces*, written soon after for violin and piano, later lightly orchestrated.

Crisply recorded, the Buffalo Philharmonic (a body rejuvenated by Foss himself during his tenure as its music director in the 1960s) plays with the passion and precision expected of any ensemble fortunate to be conducted by JoAnn Falletta, the orchestra's director since 1998. As for the ultimate worth of Foss's music, his fellow composer Virgil Thomson winningly put it in a nutshell: 'Perhaps more accomplished than convincing, but highly ingenious and venturesome all the same.' *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Passion and precision: conductor JoAnn Falletta gets the best out of the Buffalo Phil

Glazunov

Raymonda

English National Ballet Philharmonic/Gavin Sutherland

Opus Arte OACD9051D 118:76 mins (2CD)

Before she stood down as artistic director of English National Ballet, Tamara Rojo's last major project was a revamp of the great choreographer Marius Petipa's rarely seen *Raymonda*. This extravaganza for Imperial Russia had a lavish score by Glazunov, but a politically incorrect plot. ENB's revision turned it into a 19th-century love quadrangle: an English nurse in the Crimean war is torn between a nice English suitor, a maddeningly attractive Turkish one and a vocation. This is not the place to ponder the awkwardness of applying a new narrative to music and choreography designed for a totally different one. Instead, we have the ENB Philharmonic's affectionate rendition of Glazunov's music – and the booklet doesn't even tell us what the story is, so google them and take your pick.

This score is not going to eclipse Tchaikovsky any time soon, nor is it up to the level of Glazunov's own gorgeous ballet *The Seasons*. But it has its moments: a sensational dream sequence in Act 1 called 'Lanterns', atmospheric orchestration, some Rhinemaideny clarinet passages and a smattering of challenging violin solos. There's also a Hungarian *divertissement*, full of *czardas*es etc, in the third act.

Conducted by Gavin Sutherland, the English National Ballet Philharmonic – which probably knows it better than anyone else – plays mostly well, though the string sound does not have the kind of opulence that could realise the music's full potential. Recorded sound quality is reasonable, but perhaps does not add enough bloom. The whole, if not exactly lacklustre, lacks the extra lustre it needs in order to create true ballet magic. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Haydn

Haydn 2032, Vol. 15: La Reine – Symphonies Nos 50, 62 & 85

Kammerorchester Basel/Giovanni Antonini

Alpha Classics ALPHA696 66:29 mins

These three symphonies are all associated with 18th-century royalty – hence the title Giovanni Antonini has given to this latest instalment in his complete Haydn cycle. No. 85 belongs to the series of six works composed for Paris in the 1780s, and its nickname of 'La Reine de France' arose because Marie-Antoinette was one of its early admirers. Much less familiar than this piece, with its slow movement based on a French folk song, are the other two symphonies recorded here. No. 50 seems to have been assembled out of an operatic prologue called *Der Götterrath* (The Counsel of the Gods) which was performed when the Empress Maria Theresa visited the Esterháza palace in 1773. Its distinctly old-fashioned slow movement has its melodic line played by the combined muted violins doubled by the cellos an octave lower. Here, Antonini might advantageously have fleshed out the thin texture by adding a keyboard part. On the other hand, the minuet is astonishingly forward-looking. Its trio begins by reiterating the minuet's imperious theme (though minus the trumpets and drums), before it dissolves

BEN KNABE, CHERYL GORSKI

into an ingratiating oboe melody in a new key. Moreover, the trio's second half is cut short, leaving the music suspended in mid-air until the reprise of the minuet comes crashing in.

The D major Symphony No. 62 was again probably associated with festivities for Maria Theresa at Esterháza. Its most impressive movement is the finale, which begins quietly and subtly with the music not yet firmly in the home key, and has some intricate counterpoint in its latter half. Antonini's performances are as lively as ever, keeping the players of the Kammerorchester Basel on their toes throughout. Followers of this series needn't hesitate. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Mozart

Symphonies Nos 34-36
Philharmonia Orchestra/ Michael Collins
BIS BIS-2757 80 mins

Over-subscribed as it may well be, there's always room in the Mozart discography for new recordings of this stature. These offerings, from the Philharmonia Orchestra under Michael Collins, prove immensely satisfying.

Like its earlier C major siblings (Nos 9, 16, 22 and 28) the Symphony No. 34, K338, Mozart's last composed in Salzburg (1780), is popularly eclipsed by the 'Linz' (also heard here) and 'Jupiter' Symphonies, Nos 36 and 41. But Michael Collins's idiomatic and emphatic direction assures vigorously crafted, freshly-minted result here. Originally conceived with an additional movement, left incomplete and later excised, the authoritative Neue Mozart-Ausgabe score and orchestral parts which Collins employs helpfully restores the delectable K409 *Minuet*, known from autographed manuscripts from 1786. It makes a welcome addition to this release.

Widely respected as a Mozartian of uncommon distinction and discernment, Michael Collins's reading of Symphony No. 35 ('Haffner') seemed unlikely to disappoint, but in the event, it proves altogether superb. Delivered with striking technical verve and unerring attention to fine

Mining Mozart's riches: Michael Collins digs deep as a conductor

BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

orchestral detailing, Collins's keenly sprung rhythms impart quickfire drama and abundant incident to his wholly absorbing account, often reminiscent of Nikolaus Harnoncourt's groundbreaking 1981 Teldec recording with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the first historically-informed recording of this symphony on modern instruments.

Mozart famously completed his 'Linz' Symphony, No. 36 in C, in just four days during the autumn of 1783. Michael Collins capitalises on its overwhelmingly celebratory mood, the pomp of the opening *Adagio* introduction counterpoised effectively by the vitality of the main first movement *Allegro*, while the mercurial *Presto* finale affords a brilliant concluding flourish to this outstanding issue. Astute performances, rigorous musical integrity and exceptional sound – unreservedly recommended! *Michael Jameson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

R Schumann

Complete Symphonies
Dresden Philharmonic/ Marek Janowski
Pentatone PTC 5186 989 130:17 mins (2CD)

Strikingly, it's the two most upbeat, prevailingly good-natured symphonies – the 'Spring' (No. 1) and the 'Rhenish' (No. 3) – that come off best here. Right from that wonderful opening fanfare, the 'Spring' has a sense of confident, intelligent, loving engagement with the music, well served by the recording team, which carried me right through even the one questionable moment. I realise there's some ambiguity about the tempo of the *Scherzo*'s second *Trio* section (is it the first *Trio* or both that's *Molto più vivace*?), but I miss the bounce into forward-racing dance energy in Marek Janowski's slower, steadier reading. Otherwise though it's a delight, exhilarating with contained but warm expression – and the quietly ardent Dresden horns at the heart of the finale are a highlight. Much the same could be said about the 'Rhenish', especially the *Ländler* second and aria third movements, though I did miss the rising elemental tide of excitement as the finale builds – this is two cheers rather than three. It's not very surprising that, despite a beautiful start, the knotty, complicated, sometimes elusive Second Symphony doesn't quite come off nearly so well here. Without the sense of urgent, fragile, nervously strained conflict John Eliot Gardiner brings out so persuasively, it does tend to feel over-repetitive. As for the Fourth, the *Romanze* and *Scherzo* come across well, but in the outer movements Schumann's obsessiveness again becomes problematic – and it can be a virtue in the right hands. There certainly wasn't much of a sense of lift for me at the end of the finale, and overall the symphony doesn't feel quite as impetuous or close to the edge as it can. *Stephen Johnson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Sibelius

Symphonies Nos 2 & 5
Orchestre Metropolitain de Montréal/Yannick Nézet-Séguin
ATMA Classique ACD22453 75 mins

Predictably, Yannick Nézet-Séguin gets the pacing and the frissons absolutely right in Sibelius's two biggest and best-known symphonic adventures. The peak of Sibelius's masterly revision to fuse the first two movements of the Fifth is the perfect sun-from-behind-the-clouds moment; as the *scherzo* gathers propulsion, you hear extra details in the articulation of the lower strings. As a whole, the Montréal Metropolitain strings are a bit too soft grained to manage the cragginess, especially in the first collective violin proclamation of the Second, but the big statements of that concise opening movement are all perfectly profiled. The winds are personable and human, from flutes onward; the bassoons deliver the opening melody in the lugubrious sequel, allegedly inspired by the meeting of Don Juan and the Stone Guest, with bardic vocals, though there isn't quite the electric charge in what follows that we get from Paavo Järvi or Klaus Mäkelä. Turbulence is excitingly done, though, in the development of the *Finale*, its climaxes are delivered with romantic breadth rather than Nordic directness.

The Fifth is mixed too, though it starts with the finest horn tone. There isn't quite the atmosphere other recent versions find in the two first-movement wanderings through the wood. The deceptively simple-seeming, *intermezzo*-like centrepiece is beautifully nuanced, though, down to the last oboe note. Balances are admirable, though I would have liked more space around the orchestra.

If not the most startling of recent interpretations, this is fine enough for anyone who wants a relatively infrequent pairing of the two most celebrated Sibelius symphonies. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Jaime Martín / Siobhan Stagg
Chief Conductor
Soprano
Debussy
& Strauss
Jaime Martín
Siobhan Stagg
Featuring
Debussy (arr. Brett Dean) Ariettes oubliées
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CRUISE COLLECTIVE

CONCERTO CHOICE

Expressive Beethoven from a stellar trio

Nicholas Kenyon **enjoys the energy of Kanneh-Mason, Benedetti and Grosvenor**

Beethoven

Triple Concerto; Folk Songs*

Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello), Nicola Benedetti (violin), Benjamin Grosvenor (piano), *Gerald Finley (bass-baritone); Philharmonia Orchestra/Santtu-Matias Rouvali

Decca 485 4624 56:12 mins

There are surely no more charismatic young performers in this country today than violinist Nicola Benedetti, cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason and pianist Benjamin Grosvenor, and together they make a stellar team, bursting with energy and expressive precision.

Kanneh-Mason launches the opening movement wistfully, with a gentle portamento in the first phrase, while Benedetti answers with a steely, shining tone and not a hint of a slide. But they match perfectly in the energetic passagework that can be so often clouded in live performance but is super-clear in this recording, while Grosvenor mediates perfectly between them with luminous playing and little rhythmic hesitations that map out the shape of the piece.

The *Largo* is perhaps a couple of notches too slow, but Kanneh-Mason sweeps aside doubts with the main theme; his cello is often called upon to sing at the very top of its register and does so with yearning eloquence. The *Rondo* finale scurries along with crisp virtuosity and youthful exuberance; accompanying, the Philharmonia Orchestra sounds rather large for the purpose, but Santtu-Matias Rouvali keeps it firmly leashed.

> Santtu-Matias Rouvali keeps things on a tight leash

The album adds a selection from Beethoven's many arrangements of Scottish, Welsh and Irish folk songs, sung with an admirable lack of sentimentality by bass-baritone Gerald Finley. These are honestly not especially interesting arrangements: could we have hoped for a violin sonata or a cello sonata? There is a deliciously kitsch encore, however, in Kriesler's arrangement of the *Londonderry Air*.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Perfect partners: Benjamin Grosvenor, Nicola Benedetti and Sheku Kanneh-Mason

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CHRIS O'DONOVAN

Bartók

Violin Concerto No. 1; Viola Concerto etc

Yuri Zhislin (violin/viola); State Symphony Capella of Russia/Valery Poliansky

Orchid Classics ORC100304 52:08 mins

Recorded in Moscow in 2021, this is a technically superb performance of three of Bartók's masterpieces, or nearly. The Viola Concerto was left unfinished on the composer's death in 1945; its orchestration was completed by Tibor Serly. This work, commissioned by William Primrose from the struggling Bartók in the US, has a special, introspective aura, as if the composer is perhaps coming to terms through its pages with the spectres of his exile and worsening leukaemia. The Violin Concerto No. 1, in contrast, dates from 1908 and is haunted by a different ghost: that of 'half happiness' in his former relationship with the violinist Stefi Geyer. The *Romanian Folk Dances* make, as ever, the perfect filler.

Yuri Zhislin, in a relatively unusual move, is soloist on viola and violin – and proves equally mesmerising on both. He is blessed with a smooth, luminous sound, eloquently alive and expressive, and navigates Bartók's plentiful technical challenges as if it is second nature. The State Symphony Capella of Russia under Valery Poliansky matches him for fullness of tone and precision.

Two major problems stand out. The first is the acoustic, as cavernous and gloopy as a local swimming pool. The second – perhaps exacerbated by the first – is the lack of defined character between the two very different concertos. Even the *Romanian Dances*, despite plenty of verve, suffer from this: excellence of sound seems to become all-important, while excavating the music's deeper personality, complete with folk influences and personal associations, takes rather a back seat. The recorded sound makes the most of the tonal glow, but the excessive resonance remains unwelcome. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Bronsart • Henselt

Piano Concertos

Paul Wee (piano); Swedish Chamber Orchestra/Michael Collins

BIS BIS-2715 59:28 mins

No, the artist's biography doesn't begin with an extended typo. Paul Wee is indeed a barrister at Essex Court Chambers in London, specialising in commercial law and investor-state arbitration. But he is also a superb pianist who makes

recordings exploring the byways of the Romantic virtuoso repertoire, first as a solo artist and now for the first time as a concerto soloist.

Once again he's chosen pieces that would score highly in 'Rare Romantic Piano Concerto' *Top Trumps* (and no surprises to hear that both already appear in Hyperion's long-running series exploring this very genre). The F minor Piano Concerto by Adolph von Henselt (1814-89) was 'the Rachmaninov Second of its day', according to Jeremy Nicholas – and it has an absolute beauty of a slow movement. Think Chopin meets Rachmaninov – and Wee finds an excellent balance between cantabile lyricism and passion. He relishes the turbulent first movement too, and flies with astonishing virtuosity through the finale, the sort of thing that'd go down a storm at the Proms. (It was played there once, in 1906. Wee is about to make his Wigmore Hall debut, but in fact rarely gives public concerts.)

It's undoubtedly the better of the two works on the album, but the Bronsart Concerto in F sharp minor has its considerable moments, though in the first movement there's some rather pedestrian orchestral writing and at times it sounds too much like second-hand Schumann, Brahms and Liszt. The central slow movement has some lovely string writing and Wee brings a real heartfelt quality to his playing, but it's the fiery tarantella finale that's the best of this piece. Wee's fingers dance with clarity and delight around the keyboard and here, as elsewhere, he and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Michael Collins, have an excellent rapport. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Mozart with mettle: Sibylle Mahni's take on the horn concertos is joyful

ANNA MEIER, FABRIZIO MALTESE

Danny Elfman

Percussion Concerto*; Wunderkammer

*Colin Currie; RLPO/JoAnn Falletta
Sony Classical 196588898426 54:21 mins

Whilst it is tempting to reference the film-like qualities of Danny Elfman's music, this album featuring his percussion concerto and the orchestral piece *Wunderkammer* delivers what Elfman says he wants to achieve; namely 'a room of mystery… which can be fun or scary, intriguing or instructive.' The movements of this orchestral bonanza contain qualities that Elfman savours; drama, mystery and sudden changes of mood. He clearly loves percussion and is fond of the metal timbres; combinations of glockenspiel, vibraphone and tubular bell – leading to a glassy quality in the sound. He also exploits the range of techniques within the percussion section; glissando on the timpani, brushes, hard and soft sticks liberally used. The workout for the full orchestra is evident, however, and woodwind, brass and strings are tested, individually creating vibrancy and depth.

Percussion nevertheless continues to be the main star of the album, and Colin Currie's performance in the concerto, along with percussionists of the orchestra, excites and enthrals. The huge range of instruments here explores lovely qualities on gongs, crotales and an assortment of unpitched drums. Hints of inspiration by Shostakovich and Janáček, characterisations and fantastical soundscapes jump out of the recording and exchanges between marimba and piano, strings and vibraphone, snare drum and tambourine produce a cacophony of ideas.

It is this cacophony of ideas however that spills out in all directions, occasionally leaving the listener needing a slow intake of breath. Elfman, though, ought to be pleased; he wants his music to be 'never boring'. *Anne Templer*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Mozart

Horn Concertos

Sibylle Mahni (horn); Brandenburg Symphony/Andreas Spering
Prospero PROSP0083 52 mins

There is certainly no shortage of recordings of Mozart's ebullient horn concertos, given their place as a cornerstone of the horn repertoire. Written for Mozart's friend, the horn virtuoso Joseph Ignaz Leutgeb, the works are full of lyrical, elegantly phrased and at times witty writing for natural horn, the infectious spirit of which the soloist in this Brandenburger Symphoniker recording, Sibylle Mahni, approaches in rigorously sensitive fashion. A soloist and chamber musician, Mahni is also horn professor at the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik Berlin and former principal horn at the Frankfurt Opera.

It's the *Rondo Allegro* third movement of K417 which shows Mahni's mettle. It is gloriously buoyant, skillfully articulated and thoroughly joyful. Mahni's dynamics, here as elsewhere, are nuanced and expressive, and the Brandenburg, under conductor Andreas Spering, match her in their fleet-footedness.

There's another zippy *Rondo Allegro* in K495 – so well known, and yet so fresh here. Mahni is superb in the lower range, technically extremely astute. Her playing here and elsewhere is neat, always responsive to Mozart's elegant phrasing, and nuanced. If there is a quibble, and it is perhaps an unfair one, it is that it is very occasionally a little too contained – perhaps overthought. In the K412, the opening *Allegro* is taken at a fair lick, with the Brandenburg nimble in support of Mahni. But the somewhat ponderous pacing and phrasing of the second movement *Rondo* sounds as if it is labouring some unknown point. That aside, overall this is a joyous recording, played with clarity and infectious élan. *Sarah Urwin Jones*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Mozart • Poulenc

Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 7 for 3 Pianos in F major, K242 'Lodron'*; Piano Concerto No. 10 for 2 Pianos in E flat major, K365; **Poulenc:** Concerto for 2 Pianos and Orchestra in D minor

Mari Kodama, Momo Kodama, *Karin Kei Nagano (piano); Orchestre de la Suisse Romande/Kent Nagano
Pentatone PTC 5187 202 64:42 mins

'Making music with family members is always something very special,' say these players in a foreword. 'The level of intimacy is incomparably higher, the shared understanding often deeper, the tension more exciting and gruelling… magic unfolds, which in turn affects our personal relationships deeply.'

Their producer Job Maarse was inspired to propose this line-up by hearing Robert Casadesus, his wife and his son Jean play these Mozart works, and the example of the orginal historical line-up was an additional spur. Countess Antonia Lodron had commissioned the three-piano piece for herself and her daughters Maria Aloisa and Maria Josepha to play. And while Maria Aloisa and her mother had advanced pianistic skills, the 11-year-old Maria Josepha's limitations meant that the third piano part had to be more modest.

Meanwhile Mozart composed K365 to be played with his sister Nannerl, who also performed his two-piano reduction of K242 with him.

The first thing to say about this performance of K242 is that one has absolutely no sense of the third piano being a weak link: the cumulative effect is smooth and seamless, and the work has an easy charm. But it feels like an early piece, in contrast to K365. The latter work radiates the refinement of maturity, with richer textures and adventurous key changes which this trio exploit to the full.

The Mozartian link between Mozart's concertos and Poulenc's one may be tenuous, but his work is the main attraction of this album. Starting off with the composer in bad boy mode, it has spoof-Mozartian and gamelan sections, plus a rich mix of other echoes (of Rachmaninov, Stravinsky and Prokofiev), and it investigates the effects which can be achieved by proceeding in two simultaneously clashing keys. *Michael Church*

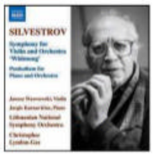
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Valentin Silvestrov

Symphony for Violin and Orchestra*; Postludium for Piano and Orchestra**

*Janusz Wawrowski (violin); **Jurgis Karnavičius (piano); Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra/ Christopher Lyndon-Gee

Naxos 8.574413 63:09 mins



It's hard to disentangle Silvestrov's music from his circumstances as a Ukrainian, first in the Soviet Union, where he was twice expelled from the Composers' Union for his 'confrontational style'; as one of the leading composers in an independent Ukraine; and currently in exile in Berlin. The Symphony for Violin dates from the last years of Soviet hegemony, and it's a fundamentally elegiac work, where Silvestrov's characteristic referential style is set up with gestures that recall the opening of the second movement of Berg's Concerto. Ghosts of Mahler, Schubert, Britten and others peer through the curtains, but Silvestrov keeps a grip on the structure, never allowing any musical event to outstay its welcome – helped no end by Lyndon-Gee's controlled pacing – and creating further interest in the variety of orchestral colour and texture. Wawrowski is an eloquent exponent of the many lyrical passages, although not quite as secure in the disjointed leaping phrases in the third movement, but leads the Symphony surely to its peaceful resolution.

Postludium is an earlier work, which Lyndon-Gee describes as the first which embodies Silvestrov's mature style, where memories of past musics, some tonal, some not, create a tapestry of allusion without quotation. Starting in a similar manner to the Violin Symphony, but even more dissonantly, it soon turns toward a veiled tonality, which at first rarely settles to a specific key, nor to rhythmic predictability. But the cells gradually join up, creating an ostinato for Karnavičius's cadenza, which is the only really soloistic music he has, before sinking back into the orchestral texture. It's all strangely beautiful, and, at the same time, disconcertingly haunting. *Martin Cotton*

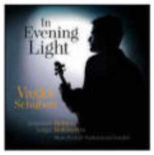
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

In Evening Light

Pēteris Vasks: Violin Concerto No. 2 'In Evening Light'; Lonely Angel – Adagio; **Schubert:** Rondeau brillant

Sebastian Bohren (violin); Munich Chamber Orchestra/ Sergej Bolkhovets

Avie AV2662 67:05 mins



The album takes its name from the subtitle of the Concerto, which fulfils first expectations in its reflective demeanour, starting with plangent descending phrases in the orchestra, and the long lines spun by the soloist in a gently swaying triple metre – like a sarabande, as the sleeve note suggests – backed by lush string textures, in a firmly tonal language. It's very beautiful, and beautifully played all round, so the lengthy cadenza, with more attack in its double stops, and the first use of pizzicato comes as a complete change of gear. The crepuscular mood is restored in the linked second movement, another *Andante*, but the music struggles to break away with greater dynamic variety, more angular melodies, agonised harmonies and unsettled rhythms which find full expression in another cadenza, although the heart of it, marked *Con Amore*, anticipates the final movement, where the peaceful mood takes over again, rises to an anguished climax, and then settles to a quiet resolution.

Lonely Angel sees Bohren play against a background of muted strings, with a high sustained line which lasts for most of the work's 13 minutes, interrupted only by some arpeggiated figures, which slightly disturb the ecstatic feel of the piece, not helped by a little unevenness of attack.

The Schubert comes between the two Vasks works, and, although it's skilfully done, both as an arrangement and a performance, with its sometimes quirky changes of tempo finely judged, it seems to have strayed in from a different album altogether. *Martin Cotton*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Seasons Interrupted

Works by Schubert, Piazzolla and Kirmo Lintinen

Trey Lee (cello); English Chamber Orchestra/Emilia Hoving et al

Signum Classics SIGCD791 61:15 mins

We are dancing ever nearer to the edge of climate abyss – a justification for Trey Lee using his recording platform to raise awareness of impending catastrophe. All the material featured here is therefore connected to seasons, including the opening transcriptions of Schubert Lieder, where Lee brings an exquisite delivery of the melody with subtle piano accompaniment from Georgy Tchaidze. Using his own arrangements, he succeeds in creating an intoxicating intimacy that is in sharp contrast to the street music of Piazzolla's *Four Seasons* which deploys an edgy tango style. Lee's sharply idiomatic versions are perhaps the highlight of the album, the catchy and highly charged music sounding simply captivating thanks to sizzling performances and brilliant playing from the English Chamber Orchestra.

The album focuses on three different eras, the contemporary element provided by Finnish composer Kirmo Lintinen's Cello Concerto. Dedicated to Lee, it continues the theme of climate change. Lintinen's style is accessible, with an enlarged tonal language, the opening *Inizio Dystopia*, a reflection of weather chaos. Here the cello solo line fights to rise above the darkly dissonant orchestral timbres, which offer hues of Messiaen and Mahler before the palette clears and the clarity of Baroque harmony restores equilibrium with a pastiche *Gavotte*. The more stable invention is meant to reflect the predictable seasons of that time. Timbral and technical diversity of the cello is highlighted in the *Cadenza*, before the work concludes with a slightly faux up-beat *Finale*. As always, Lee is consummately skilled in his delivery, and brings real intensity to the solo part. But Lintinen's eclectic mix of musical styles is perhaps less convincing. *Jo Talbot*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

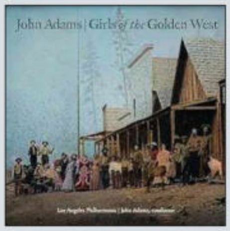
Assured in Silvestrov violinist Janusz Wawrowski gives an eloquent performance

Opera & Stage

OPERA CHOICE

What a rush! John Adams strikes gold...

The composer's latest opera dazzles with great solo turns, says ***Claire Jackson***



John Adams

Girls of the Golden West

Julia Bullock (soprano), Davóne Tines (bass-baritone), Paul Appleby (tenor) et al; Los Angeles Philharmonic/ John Adams

Nonesuch 7559790049 123:26 mins (2CD)

Like *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *Nixon in China* and *Doctor Atomic*, John Adams's new opera *Girls of the Golden West* considers a critical moment in American history: the gold rush that inspired the California Dream – and all the dazzling inequality that went with it. The timing is interesting. Since the 2008 financial crash there has been renewed interest in gold, a fascination that plays out in reality TV shows such as *Aussie Gold Hunters* that follow enterprising – and often eccentric – metal detectorists attempting to find nuggets left behind by the first mining wave. Librettist Peter Sellars draws from original sources to create characters that represent those propping up some people's new-found wealth: care-worn minors Joe Cannon and Clarence, Ned Peters, a formerly enslaved man on the run, and Josefa Segovia, Ah Sing and Dame Shirley, the three real-life women from the opera's title.

The spiky rhythms of the opening suggest horses' hooves, machinery, pick axes plunging into the soil, or, at the end of Act I, something more ominous – a musical emblem that appears throughout. The influence of Ives can be heard in the shifting layers; once a funeral march, now a Fourth of July celebration.

> **The influence of Ives can be heard in the shifting layers**

As Dame Shirley, Julia Bullock is on scintillating form, particularly as she acts out the part of Lady MacBeth in Act II. Davóne Tines, who came to UK prominence at last year's Classical Pride, has a rounded bass-baritone that is perfect as the gruff Ned Peters. The male voices of the Los Angeles Master Chorale brilliantly create the brooding mob of minors.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Golden girl: soprano Julia Bullock is on scintillating form as Dame Shirley

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Cimarosa

L'Olimpiade

Josh Lovell; Rocío Pérez; Marie Lys; Maite Beaumont; Mathilde Ortscheidt; Alex Banfield; Les Talens Lyriques/Christophe Rousset

Château de Versailles Spectacles CVS143 146:04 mins (2CD)

Christophe Rousset wins the palm with *L'Olimpiade*, Domenico Cimarosa's previously unrecorded 1784 opera whose vocal acrobatics, as well as title, link this French label release to the summer games in Paris. In the opera, Sicyon ruler Clistene offers his daughter Aristea in marriage to the victor of his games. Aristea loves and is beloved by Megacle, who is bound by oath to his friend Licida, who – ignorant of their feelings, and mistakenly believing his own fiancée Argene to be lost to him – has also fallen for Aristea and compels Megacle to compete as Licida to procure Aristea on Licida's behalf. That Cimarosa's score renders this action at all credible attests to its power.

Young Spanish coloratura Rocío Pérez (Aristea) is the standout singer in Rousset's excellent cast, with a bell-like core, easy lyricism, searing emotionalism, leaping staccato proficiency and registral command up a top G. The plummy earnestness and slow-burn build of line by mezzo-soprano Maite Beaumont (Megacle) are the foil to Pérez, and super-charge her central aria 'Se cerca, se dice'. Tenor Josh Lovell (Clistene) smashes his bravura before pivoting to convincing soulfulness in the second act with 'Non so donde viene'. Another second-act conversion is envoiced by soprano Marie Lys (Argene), the icy precision of whose first-act anger yields to hot self-reproach. Mezzo-soprano Mathilde Ortscheidt (Licida) is riveting when upset, but disrupts serene melodies by pressing too hard on individual pitches.

Rousset's keyboard accompaniment shapes recitative into arresting exchanges. A veteran conductor of operas by Neapolitan composers like Cimarosa, Rousset makes of Les Talens Lyriques a feverish, clattering force, whose frantic *allegros* and sudden interjections by solo woodwinds and other instruments constitute their own dramatis personae. With this recording, the listeners are the ultimate winners. *Berta Joncus*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Meyerbeer

L'Africaine – Vasco da Gama

Kirsten MacKinnon (soprano) et al; Chor der Oper Frankfurt; Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester/ Antonello Manacorda

Naxos 8.660558-60 200:44 mins (3CD)

Meyerbeer was dead before the first night of *L'Africaine* in 1865. So the composer's last Parisian Grand Opéra was prepared for performance by Francois-Joseph Fétis. This new recording from the Frankfurt Opera, we are told, 'reflects his original intentions.'

Whilst the music is among some of the most accomplished that Meyerbeer composed, characterisation is decidedly perfunctory and the drama often pedestrian. What the first audience came for was spectacle delivered in spades by Meyerbeer and his librettist Scribe.

What has kept the piece in the repertoire is singing and it's the cast that make this new recording, with Michael Spyres every inch the heroic explorer Vasco de Gama frustrated in his search for an empire beyond the Cape of Good Hope. He dominates the Act 1 finale with a ringing top that could launch an expeditionary fleet singlehanded as the Portuguese Council of State pours cold water on his plans; while the legato in 'O Paradis', perhaps the best-known number in the opera, is seemingly effortless with Spyres rising to an arching top note before the angry locals burst into this earthly paradise.

Brian Mulligan makes an anguished villain out of Queen Sélika's advisor Nélusko; and Claudia Mahnke, desired by de Gama as well as Nélusko, is almost that rarity, a Falcon soprano. The Chorus, of whom so much is asked in Meyerbeer, are magnificent throughout – the sailors rounding the Cape and the women who sing off stage for Sélika as she dies under the poisonous Mancenillier tree. All credit too to conductor Antonello Manacorda for steering so straight a course through all five acts.
Christopher Cook

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Saint-Saëns

Déjanire
Kate Aldrich, Anaïs Constans et al; Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Chœr de l'Opéra de Monte-Carlo/Kazuki Yamada
Bru Zane BZ1055 104:47 mins (2CD)

Saint-Saëns's final opera has an unusual history. It began as incidental music for an open-air performance in Béziers in 1898 of a play by Louis Gallet describing how Hercules's wife Déjanire becomes jealous of his love for the conquered princess Iole and is the cause of her husband's death when a poisoned tunic she possesses is worn by him.

Following the success of this version, Saint-Saëns later decided to turn the result into a full-scale opera; though since Gallet died in the year of the play's premiere the composer had to adapt the text as an all-sung libretto himself – and made a fine job of it.

Unveiled at Monte Carlo in 1911, the full-blown opera may not have enjoyed long-term success but this exemplary recording makes the best possible case for it.

The polymath composer was steeped in the ancient world and well qualified to create an operatic drama out of a Greek myth. Suffused with a fatalistic sadness, the result is impressively serious and unfailingly skilful, dignified but never ostentatious: every character is carefully and memorably drawn, as are the many high-flown situations called for in the libretto. Here the principals are well up to its vocal and dramatic demands.

Dramatic Déjanire: Kate Aldrich is great as Saint-Saëns's titular heorine

Kate Aldrich's Déjanire is a great performance equalled in dramatic emphasis by Julien Dran's Hercule. Anaïs Constans is ideally cast as Iole, while both Jérôme Boutillier and Anna Dowsley flesh out the secondary roles of Iole's beloved Philoctète and Déjanire's confidante Phénice, respectively.

The austere tragedy is perceptively explored by conductor Kazuki Yamada in charge of Monte Carlo forces. A significant rediscovery. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Rachel Baptist
– Ireland's Black Syren

Arias etc by Geminiani, Handel, Pasquali and Purcell
Rachel Redmond (soprano); Irish Baroque Orchestra/Peter Whelan
Linn Records CKD740 55:13 mins

In the 18th century Dublin was no musical backwater. It was a teeming city which, despite the prosaic-sounding names of its music venues – the Smock Alley Theatre, Mrs Neale's Music Hall in Fishamble Street, and the like – attracted regular visits, and even residencies, from the European musical elite. Geminiani and Dubourg lived there and Handel, Pasquali, Tenducci and others became regular visitors. Rachel Baptist(e) was a local singer of African descent who delighted the audiences and 'always appeared in a yellow silk gown'. Her champion on this recording is the accomplished soprano Rachel Redmond who began her career with William Christie's Jardin des Voix and is here celebrating her own mixed heritage.

We do not have detailed knowledge of Baptist's specific repertoire but all of the items here were certainly performed in Dublin in her era. The Irish Baroque Orchestra opens with a deft and stylish account of the overture from Handel's *Samson* which was premiered there. Redmond's soprano voice makes an immediate impression. Her bright tones produce a quite spectacular duet with the trumpet in the da capo aria 'Foriera la tromba', and although in 'Softly Sweet in Lydian Measures' from *Alexander's Feast* the approach is more subdued, the phrases unfurl with impressive control. In Purcell's 'Fairest Isle' she perhaps gets a little too anchored in the two bar phrasing, and the fluttering decorations of her partly French style of singing slightly diminish the commanding aura of the words bestowed by Venus on these lands. That said, this is an adventurous album and a timely reminder of our multicultural musical past.
Anthony Pryer

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...
Saint-Saëns's *Déjanire*

It was Prince Albert I of Monaco who instigated the first performance of Saint-Saëns's opera, which premiered at the Théatre de Monte-Carlo in March 1911. It was well received by critics and audiences, who revelled in the composer's four-act lyric tragedy. The opera finds its musical roots in the composer's incidental music for Louis Gallet's 1898 tragic play (itself based on Sophocles's Herculean tale), the choruses from which are preserved here. While he also brought in music from his 1877 work *La Jeunesse d'Hercule*, Saint-Saëns was at pains to assure that this opera was no mere re-hash.

ALLISON MICHAEL ORENSTEIN, GETTY

Choral & Song

CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

An appealing exhibition of neglected Schoenberg

Claire Booth and Christopher Glynn present songs by the composer in a vivid new light, says ***Erik Levi***

Expressionist view: Christopher Glynn and Claire Booth create a vivid display

Schoenberg

Expressionist Music – Erwartung, Op. 2 No. 1; Madchenlied, Op. 6 No. 3 etc
Claire Booth (soprano), Christopher Glynn (piano)
Orchid Classics ORC100306 60:50 mins

The neglect of Schoenberg's substantial output of lieder, in the recital room and on recordings, remains something of a mystery. Perhaps the composer's reputation as an uncompromising modernist has much to do with it.

Although openly acknowledging Schoenberg's problematic reputation, Claire Booth and Christopher Glynn have come up with an ingenious way of presenting his music in the most accessible and vivid manner. Their solution is to create a kind of songbook focused around eight central themes that are directly related to some of the composer's paintings. To make the link seem more tangible, illustrations of the relevant works are reproduced in the booklet.

Adopting this approach enables Booth and Glynn to maximise the variety of musical expression explored in each of the themes with performances that respond vividly to all the twists and turns in Schoenberg's complex and ever-changing musical armoury. Thus, post-Wagnerian songs from the earlier part of Schoenberg's career rub shoulders with settings which operate on the borderlines of conventional tonality and those, such as the *Brettl-Lieder* and Folksong arrangements, that are simpler or more ironic in character.

> Booth and Glynn maximise the variety of Schoenberg's musical expression

Such startling juxtapositions make a far more powerful impression than adopting a conventional chronological survey. They also serve to highlight some particularly powerful works such as the Nietzsche setting 'Der Wanderer', or Heinrich Ammann's 'Jane Grey'. In addition, Glynn provides further contrast with two of the *Six Pieces for Piano*, the last of which is a moving conclusion to the album.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Dodgson

Canticle of the Sun – Choral Works
Sonoro/Neil Ferris et al
SOMM Recordings SOMMCD0686 70:11 mins

This very accomplished and enjoyable album brings together choral works of British composer Stephen Dodgson. Born in 1924, Dodgson composed some 250 works across his lifetime, and while his music didn't necessarily accord with the prevailing wind of 20th-century European composition, his deft, beautiful scores nonetheless stand the test of time. His music is broadly tonal but often only obliquely, and his rich body of choral music reveals a perceptive approach to text.

The album opens with one of Dodgson's last choral pieces, *Canticle of the Sun* (2008). The piece features a florid and declamatory text, written in the voice of the sun itself, by the English poet John Heath-Stubbs, and vocal ensemble Sonoro deliver an astute and vibrant account of this celebratory work.

The album's standout work though is Dodgson's *Four Poems of Mary Coleridge* (1987), scored for choir and solo flute. There is a darker edge to this piece which is well-matched by flautist Katherine Bicknell, whose gorgeous velvety tone and sinuous phrasing meet the score's every twist from light to shade. Jon Stainsby also deserves special mention for his powerful bass solo in 'Nocturne I (The Fire, the Lamp and I)', bringing a terrific depth of sound and feeling to this eerie fairytale of a song.

Other works include *'Tis Almost One* (1984), a dynamic cantata for mixed voices and organ which features some of the album's zingiest harmonies, and *Lines from Hal Summers* (1997) which finds Sonoro on marvellously pliant and virtuosic form, particularly in the tricky 'Riotous Voices' that snakes and swells at breakneck speed.

Performed with real commitment throughout, this is altogether a commendable selection that shines a welcome light on Dodgson's appealing and engaging music.
Kate Wakeling

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Fauré

La Bonne Chanson: L'Horizon chimérique; Ballade; Mélodies

Stéphane Degout (baritone), Alain Planès (piano)

Harmonia Mundi HMM902382
81:06 mins

This programme comprises a wide selection of Fauré's song cycles or collections, from the *Poème d'un jour* of 1878 to his final work in the genre, *L'horizon chimérique* of 1921.

Baritone Stéphane Degout may be better known for his work in opera, but his performances of song and especially the French *mélodie* have been widely admired. Nevertheless, at times his impetuous vocal approach can be a little too forceful: there's variety and nuance in the *Poème d'un jour,* with a mix of delicacy and heartiness, but the final note of the last song loses focus.

Once again, though the music's sweep is finely conveyed in the composer's more complex response to the Verlaine texts of *La Bonne Chanson*, Degout can be overbearing, though he captures the mystery of the visionary 'La lune blanche luit dans les bois'.

In the 1914 *Le jardin clos*, Degout deploys fine legato and some magnificently rich tone – though occasionally a bit too much of it.

Throughout, Alain Planès's playing is both carefully measured and finely controlled, his textures internally well balanced. A period instrument – a Pleyel of 1892 – is used, its tone more brittle than ideal. Planès includes the substantial *Ballade* in F sharp major, Op. 19, in its initial piano solo version dating from the time of the earliest songs on the album. (Fauré later produced a version for piano and orchestra.)

As far as the recording is concerned, the voice is too far forward and less than ideally integrated with the piano.

George Hall

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Messiaen

Poèmes pour mi; Chants de terre et de ciel; La Mort du nombre*

Barbara Hannigan (soprano), *Charles Sy (tenor), *Vilde Frang (violin), Bertrand Chamayou (piano)

Alpha Classics ALPHA1033 58:41 mins

NICK RUTTER

Canticle spectacle: Sonoro are on virtuosic form in Stephen Dodgson

This is personal. It is also special. Messiaen's song cycles are his most intimate music, exploring facets of his intense love for his first wife, Claire Delbos. *Poèmes pour Mi* (1936) celebrates their marriage, expanded in *Chants de terre et de ciel* (1938) to encompass the delight and fears of being a parent to baby 'Pilule', their son Pascal. Being Messiaen, love is viewed through the lens of orthodox Catholicism, though there is nothing prim or prudish. Vivid, sometimes disturbing, surrealist imagery and fervent emotion entwine with unabashed sharing of moments such as waking to Claire's arms draped around his neck.

Remarkably, Barbara Hannigan had not previously sung these cycles when she started collaborating with pianist Bertrand Chamayou a few years ago. His exceptionally strong pedigree in Messiaen is apparent throughout and, as might be expected, this music fits Hannigan's superlative talents like a glove. She floats seemingly effortlessly above Chamayou's delicately dusted curlicues in 'Bail avec Mi', is fearsome in 'Épouvante' and soars with burnished radiance in 'Action de grâces'. Hannigan negotiates the virtuosic twists and turns in the parental nightmare that opens 'Minuit pile ou face' with ease, while her vulnerability in its closing pages is heartbreaking. The rarely heard early scena *La mort du nombre* (1930) is a significant bonus, young tenor Charles Sy impressing with his combination of lyricism and ardency as the distressed 'first soul', assuaged by Hannigan as the angelic 'second soul', then violinist Vilde Frang's luminous ascent to conclude a heavenly album.

Christopher Dingle

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Mozart • R Strauss

Lieder

Sabine Devieilhe (soprano), Mathieu Pordoy (piano)

Erato 5419794886 66:37 mins

Strauss and Mozart blend like oil and melted butter in Sabine Devieilhe's new recording, sharing a teasing eroticism and the headlong rush of desire. A century may separate these two composers but both relish the challenge of turning words on a page into drama.

Devieilhe, who has been compared to the ineffable Natalie Dessay, has a natural instinct for such drama, transforming the history of a trampled violet in Mozart's' setting of Goethe's 'Das Veilchen' into a miniature opera; while Strauss's 'Allerseelen' is a staged lament for a woman mourning a lover, with a heart stopping postlude from the pianist Mathieu Pordoy. And there is something almost theatrical about the stretched tempos Devieilhe and Pordoy choose for 'Waldseligkeit'.

Devieilhe decorates Strauss's 'Amor' with diamond bright coloratura and spins a seamless legato throughout. Yet this is pre-eminently a partnership between pianist and singer. Strauss's settings of Felix Dahn's *Mädchenblumen* have often raised eyebrows in the recital room with their patronising attitudes towards women, but Devieilhe and Pordoy make a good case for them with ivy tendrils climbing through the piano part in 'Epheu' and a poppy bursting into a summer blaze in 'Mohnblumen'.

Not everything goes well. There is an uncomfortably intrusive violin in 'Morgen' that might have been better balanced. And Pordoy is often tempted to hold a final note a tad too long. But such blemishes are soon forgiven. The piano gently probing a woman's feelings in Mozart's 'An die Einsamkeit' and Devieilhe's final soft trill brook no criticism.

Christopher Cook

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Poulenc

Le Gendarme incompris; Cocardes; Le Bestiaire; Quatre poèmes de Max Jacob etc

Soraya Mafi (soprano), Julien van Mellaerts (baritone) et al; Manchester Camerata/John Andrews

Resonus RES10333 62:31 mins

This collection of youthful chamber works reveals Francis Poulenc to have been a more experimental and avant-garde composer than listeners familiar with his mature works might

Terrific Tippett: bass Ashley Riches is a commanding narrator in *A Child of Our Time*

otherwise realise. Most of the pieces date from the end of the First World War and the early 1920s, when Poulenc was already mixing with modernists of the French artistic scene, including Eric Satie, Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau.

The music Poulenc wrote for Jean Cocteau and Raymond Radiguet's 1920 play *Le Gendarme incompris* (based on a risqué poem by Stéphane Mallarmé) accounts for very little playing time, with most of the nine tracks consisting of spoken dialogue between the actor Sam Alexander and countertenor Lawrence Zazzo, whose musical talents are rather wasted. Much more engaging are the song cycles: the three *Cocardes mélodies*, the six animal miniatures of *Le Bestiaire* and the Cubist-inspired *Quatre poèmes de Max Jacob*, whose author was to perish in 1944. Soprano Soraya Mafi and baritone Julien Van Mellaerts negotiate the deceptively simple-seeming vocal lines with wit and flair, and in good French too.

The remainder of the programme is made up of instrumental works scored for unconventional forces. They include the three early *Mouvements perpétuels* and the later *Suite Française,* which uses themes from the 16th-century composer Claude Gervaise in incidental music for a play about Marguerite de Valois. The players of the Manchester Camerata and conductor John Andrews approach each work with vigour and more than a touch of irony. In the more wistful passages they also show that during the *années folles* of the 1920s, memories of the Great War were never far away. *John-Pierre Joyce*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

BACKGROUND TO…
Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*

Perhaps the British composer's defining work, this secular oratorio was premiered at the Adelphi Theatre in March 1944. Its wartime unveiling was pertinent, given how events in Germany had influenced its creation. Tippett's work is a visceral and very personal response to Nazi oppression and an anthem for oppressed peoples in general. He was encouraged by TS Eliot to write the libretto himself (he had approached the poet for advice) and while he sticks to a familiar oratorio form, he chose to draw on African-American Spirituals instead of more traditional chorale movements.

Tippett
A Child of Our Time

Pumeza Matshikiza (soprano),Sarah Connolly (mezzo-soprano), Ashley Riches (bass-baritone) et al; BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra/Andrew Davis
Chandos CHSA 5341 63:46 mins

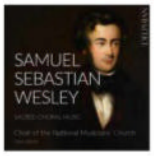
Tippett began work on *A Child of Our Time* in September 1939, shortly after Britain declared war on Germany. A lifelong pacifist, Tippett initially planned to write an opera, before realising an oratorio would be a more subtle medium for his reflections on the horrors of war. Handel's *Messiah* formed Tippett's principal model, but the composer was also drawn to the chorales that punctuate the Bach Passions and eventually settled on including arrangements of five African-American spirituals which form the emotional heart of the work.

Released to mark the 80th anniversary of the premiere, this new recording from Chandos arrives at a moment when the horrors of war and injustice feel as sharp as ever; movements like 'the Chorus of the Self-righteous' ('We cannot have them in our Empire') could not feel more chillingly prescient. This is a polished and resonant account of the work, with a stellar line-up of performers under the direction of long-term Tippett collaborator Andrew Davis. Bass Ashley Riches shines particularly as the narrator, bringing a terrific clarity and command to the role. At times, the diction of soprano Pumeza Matshikiza feels somewhat woolly in her solo movements, but her voice soars with shimmering beauty across choir and orchestra in 'Steal Away'. The BBC Symphony Orchestra give a fine performance, but the real star of the show is the BBC Symphony Chorus. They tackle the fiendish fugue in Part One with total assurance, and their expressive range and delivery of Tippett's urgent text is, from start to finish, outstanding. *Kate Wakeling*

RECORDING ★★★★
PERFORMANCE ★★★★

SS Wesley
Sacred Choral Music

Choir of the National Musicians' Church/Toby Ward
Delphian DCD34268 74:18 mins



The choral works of Samuel Sebastian Wesley seem so intrinsic to the ecclesiastical traditions of Victorian England that it's hard to imagine them as innovative and even controversial. Yet his verse anthem (or rather mini-oratorio) *The Wilderness* bewildered Wesley's employers at Hereford Cathedral, where the 22 year-old held the post of organist in 1832. Conductor Toby Ward captures a sense of freshness and drama in the big-boned verse anthems that lie at the heart of this recording, underlining the quasi-operatic qualities that so discombobulated his more conservative parishioners.

SS Wesley's compositional style continues in the tradition of his father Samuel in his reverence for Bach, Handel and Mozart. But he is also alert to his contemporaries such as Spohr, Mendelssohn and Weber, while synthesising a sound that seems effortlessly English, perfectly suited to the nation's cathedrals and churches where his music has become a mainstay.

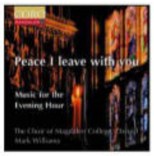
The re-evaluation of Victoriana has been a significant development

in British cultural life in recent years, and this new release takes a refreshingly clean, clear-eyed view of a composer we tend to take for granted. The choir of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the City of London (dubbed the National Musicians' Church) is bright, well balanced and animated, with fulsome solo contributions from its members. The soprano soloists are accomplished in the verse passages (though personally, I prefer the simplicity and innocence of the boy treble sound here). Wesley took an active interest in organ design, and organist Richard Gowers makes the most of the brilliant articulation of the Holy Sepulchre's pipe organ. *Ashutosh Khandekar*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Peace I leave with you

Works by Parry, Tavener, Sheppard, Joanna Marsh et al
The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford/Mark Williams
CORO COR16205 72:27 mins



Peace I leave with you marks the Magdalen Choir's debut on the CORO label, and Amy Beach's plush, velvety responsory setting of 1891 sets the tone for 70-plus minutes of mellow contemplation mining an eclectic seam of music for evening prayer stretching back some 500 years. Supplicatory, sometimes valedictory, Mark Williams's anthologising isn't without risk as one beguilingly executed meditative piece follows another, but the range of composers helps to ameliorate any sameness of mood. Not entirely perhaps. A little judicious rationing with the pause button will forestall any potential overkill.

The ultimate destination is an attentive, lovingly-shaped performance of the last of Parry's *Songs of Farewell*; completed shortly before his death, 'Lord, let me know mine end' enrobes Psalm 39 in eight sumptuous parts (prefigured earlier on the album with Wood's celebrated double choir 'Hail, gladdening light'). Separated by almost half a millennium, two of Williams's predecessors as Informator Choristarum are also featured – John Sheppard's early 16th-century *Matins antiphon* given a stately reading as the choir prepares to celebrate its 525th anniversary next year. The early music often registers particularly powerfully. Purcell's achingly imploratory 'Hear my prayer' is at once measured and sensitively sculpted, slowly unfolding like a sorrowful bud that flowers into a heart-rending climax. Gibbons's funeral verse anthem meanwhile injects the welcome diversion of organ accompaniment into an otherwise acappella landscape.

Among the contemporary offerings, the always responsive, well-integrated choral forces bring a serene, reverential simplicity to John Tavener's setting of The Lord's Prayer and in Roxanna Panufnik's 'O Hearken cultivate' a fluttery restraint. Captured on home ground in the college chapel, the recorded sound is intimate and beautifully balanced. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

From Purcell to Panufnik: Mark Williams directs a contemplative programme from Magdalen College

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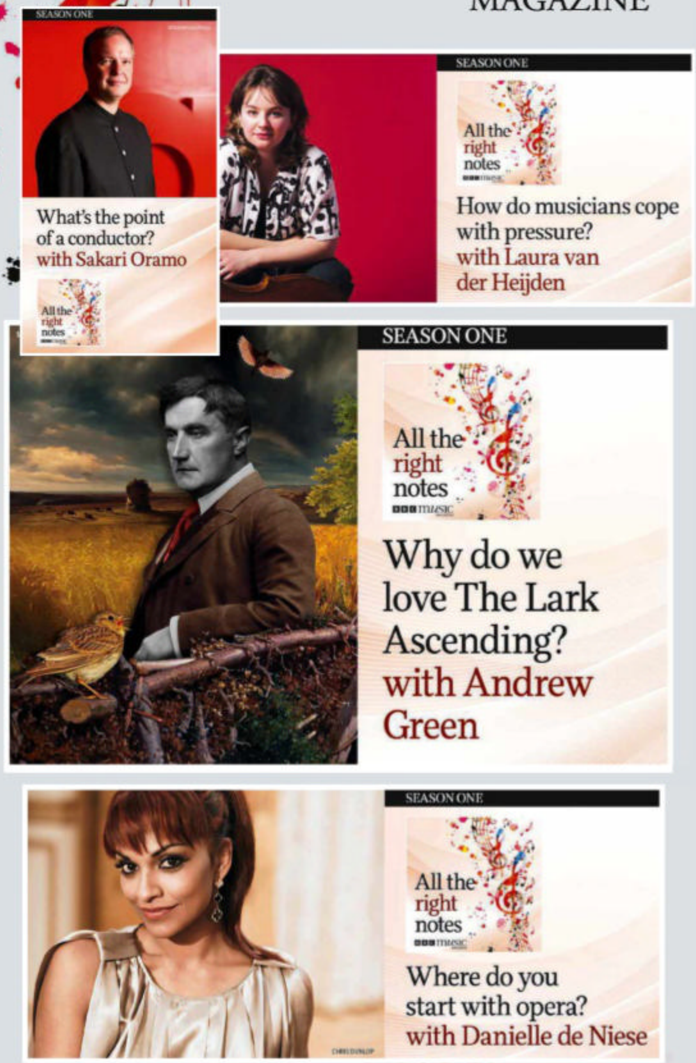

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Chamber

CHAMBER CHOICE

A captivating programme of sparkling English gems

Kate Bolton-Porciatti **enjoys Rachel Podger and Brecon Baroque's congenial take on these early works**

Eloquent dialogue: Rachel Podger (centre) and Brecon Baroque

The Muses Restor'd

Works by Blow, Handel, Locke, Purcell et al
Rachel Podger (violin); Brecon Baroque
Channel Classics CCS46324 80:42 mins

This is a captivating programme offering proof, if it were needed, that England is far from 'a land without music'. In a generous album, violinist Rachel Podger and her period ensemble Brecon Baroque journey through 17th-century English consorts to virtuosic solo music from the early Georgian period.

The ensemble is a coterie of some of the finest early musicians on the scene today – friends who evidently relish the art of musical conversation, the guiding ethos of the English consort tradition. Matthew Locke's *Little Consort* 'for several friends' encapsulates the essence of this congenial idiom, with its fleeting musical dialogues, light and transparent as sparkling crystals, all eloquently rendered. Lovely, too, is the discreet give and take between the instrumentalists in Lawes's *Fantasia-Suite* No. 8. They weave a more intricate discourse in the A minor *Fantasia-Suite* by John Jenkins, whose virtuosic passagework prefigures the Baroque style. Indeed, the album makes a chain of interesting connections between genres, styles and periods.

> These are friends who evidently relish the art of musical conversation

Among the Baroque works are two violin sonatas by Purcell and Handel. Podger and her continuo players capture the pathos and quasi-operatic quality of Purcell's G minor work and they give a radiant account of Handel's D major Sonata in which harpsichordist Marcin Świątkiewicz's inventive realisations shine.

The programme also unveils less familiar pieces: Johann Schop's wistful *Lachrimae*, recalling Dowland's celebrated 'Tears', and a work by the shadowy but brilliant composer Richard Jones, man of the theatre and demon violinist, to whose luscious *Chamber Airs* in A minor the musicians bring passion and rhetoric.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Haydn

Piano Trios Nos 12, 19, 25 & 43 etc (Complete Trios, Vol. 3)
Trio Gaspard
Chandos CHAN 20279 65:55 mins

As in the previous volumes of their Haydn cycle, Trio Gaspard has commissioned a short piece to complement the works, and this time they've turned to Kit Armstrong. Besides being a composer he's an accomplished pianist, and he's come up trumps with the dazzling *Revêtements*, whose swirling sounds contain fleeting references to the finale of Haydn's C major Trio H.27 – one of the works he wrote in London in the mid-1790s to show off the virtuoso talents of Therese Jansen Bartolozzi, who was a pupil of Clementi. The first and last movements of Haydn's piece suit the ensemble well, and they handle the gentle *siciliano*-like outer sections of the slow movement attractively, too. However, there's an aggressive side to their performance style that comes to the fore in the *Andante*'s middle section, where the sudden *fortes* sound like pistol shots; and a similar dryness of approach mars the opening *Allegro* of the E minor Trio H.12.

The remaining two works here are earlier and somewhat less ambitious, though they're not without arresting moments. The first movement of the F major Trio H.6, in particular, has a central section that unfolds entirely in the minor, and features a passage in which the cello has an independent part in dialogue with the violin. (In the large majority of Haydn's trios the cello and the pianist's left-hand part follow essentially the same line, though with subtle variations.) All in all, the liveliness and spontaneity of Trio Gaspard's performances are admirable throughout, though there are times when it's possible to feel that the music-making lacks an element of warmth. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Mozart

Violin Sonatas transcribed for flute (Mozart Stories)
Emmanuel Pahud (flute), Eric Le Sage (piano)
Warner Classics 5419789352 73 mins

While transcribing the Mozart violin sonatas for flute may be a stab in the back to a composer who did not always get on with the instrument (although his distain is often over-stated – he did write *The Magic Flute* after all), they are a triumph for those who wished there were more solo woodwind works in his oeuvre. Transcriptions of Mozart's music appeared almost immediately; here, Emmanuel Pahud plays from a collection published in 1781, later arranged by piano-maker Pleyel in 1799. During the *Allegro moderato* from the Sonata in B flat (K378) and the *Allegro vivace* in Sonata in C (K296) the dialogue between flautist and pianist is like a chirpy chat between colleagues in a cafe, which moves on to something more intimate in the *Andantino cantabile* of Sonata in G (K379). Transcriptions from string to woodwind are notoriously tricky (perhaps the most extreme recent example being Ferio Saxophone Quartet's Baroque arrangements on Chandos, CHAN10999), particularly recreating interval-based accompaniment melodies. Of course, being the superstar flautist he is, Pahud turns bowing to breathing with no issues: the *Rondo* in the K378 is springy, the *Allegro* in the Sonata in E minor (K304) is boldly declamatory. There are moments when, as in Patrick Gallois's Naxos recording of K378, some may prefer more definition – it is possible that this blurring effect is a nod to violin legato. For that, I'd stick with Alina Ibragimova and pianist Cédric Tiberghien's series (on Hyperion), but otherwise Pahud's persuasive account holds its own. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Tchaikovsky

String Quartets Nos 1 & 2; Eugene Onegin – Lensky's Aria (String Quartets Vol. 1)
Dudok Quartet Amsterdam
Rubicon RCD1103 71:53 mins

Even if you think Tchaikovsky's string quartets are staple fare – in fact only the First is a regular visitor to concert halls – you'll find them transfigured by the Dudok Quartet Amsterdam. The biggest shift is in the surface-simple D major Quartet, not exactly moved behind a gauze but far more personal and introspective than usual. At first I wondered if the opening pulsings needed more grace and vibrato, but the Dudoks are soon shifting the perspectives, with subtle rubato and unpredictable turns. This is an intensely moving performance of the famous *Andante Cantabile*, almost hesitant at times, smiling with a sigh and making use of pregnant silences. The speeding in the *Finale* absolutely works.

The Second Quartet gives us the riven composer, with a gutty, anguished, mid-air start and frenetic topplings from the heights of more ecstatic melody. The tragic utterance of the *Andante ma non tanto*, one of Tchaikovsky's most impassioned inspirations but not often enough recognised as such, has transfixing intensity. There's danger, too, in the tension and release of the finale, by no means as cheerful as previous performances have made it. The Fourth Symphony was not too far in the future when Tchaikovsky composed this, and the contrast of peasant liveliness with personal angst anticipates its finale. The transcription of Lensky's Aria from *Eugene Onegin* doesn't entirely work for me, but it's fascinating nonetheless, and the quartets are the thing.

I can hardly wait for the Third Quartet, and can we hope for a *Souvenir de Florence* with two more equally remarkable string players? *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Intensely moving: Dudok Quartet Amsterdam shines in Tchaikovsky

THERESA PEWAL, GREEN ROOM CREATIVES YURI ANDRIES

Brahms and Contemporaries, Vol. 1

Brahms: Piano Quartet No. 2 in A major; **Le Beau:** Piano Quartet in F minor
Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective
Chandos CHAN 20297 72:47 mins

Over the past few years, the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective have established an estimable reputation for imaginative programme planning, as well as an uncanny ability to unearth substantial works that have remained grievously neglected. Their latest discovery is the 1883 Piano Quartet in F minor by Luise Adolpha Le Beau (1850–1927) which makes an admirable partner for Brahms's Second Piano Quartet in this warmly recorded release.

Despite her French-sounding surname, Le Beau was in fact a German composer. A pupil of Clara Schumann and Josef Rheinberger, she rose to prominence in the early 1880s. Yet mainly because of the German musical establishment's implacable prejudice against female composers, Le Beau was ultimately unable to sustain a longterm career. Nevertheless, this Piano Quartet, premiered with great success at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, provides ample evidence of her gifts, demonstrating both a skilful handling of the medium and some instantly memorable ideas. The rich harmony of the slow movement is particularly attractive, as is the ensuing vividly scored *Mazurka*.

I need hardly add that the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective delivers a compelling and totally committed interpretation, creating a tremendous sense of forward momentum in the outer movements and inflecting the slow movement with warmth and tenderness. Their performance of the Brahms is also extremely fine with a particularly sensitive response to the darkly-hued harmonies of the slow movement and the high-spirted exuberance in the *Finale*. I'm somewhat less convinced by the approach to the first movement, in particular a tendency to linger too much over the rests in the opening motif which unduly chops up the phrasing and robs the music of its necessary sense of continuity.
Erik Levi

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Cantabile
– Anthems for Viola

Works by Bax, Britten, Vaughan Williams, Jonathan Harvey, Augusta Read Thomas and Bright Sheng
Jordan Bak (viola),
Richard Uttley (piano)
Delphian DCD34317 67:21 mins

If jollification is what you desire, the viola is not the ideal instrument. Its darkly honeyed tone better conveys loss, nostalgia and the sense of someone crying: that's certainly the impression left by the recorded performances of Lionel Tertis and William Primrose, the viola's most famous 20th-century exponents. However, the opening track from the young and gifted Jordan Bak (Jamaican-American) tells us that the instrument's range is much wider. Piquant melodic fragments one second, furious double-stopping the next, the rough-voiced mixed up with the ethereal: that's the arresting substance of Jonathan Harvey's *Chant*.

Happily, Bak's command of his instrument isn't remotely diminished when the musical language is more conventional. Vaughan Williams's early *Romance* might be pallid at first, but the height of passion is still reached; while the 27 minutes of Arnold Bax's Sonata, premiered by Tertis in 1922, inexorably lead us from Celtic melancholy to bumptious vigour and back again, with extra

energy deriving from the constant interplay between Baks's viola and Richard Uttley's incisive piano. The two make a wonderful team, and are further blessed by the warm acoustic afforded by Edinburgh's Greyfriars Kirk.

The rest of the 'anthems' in this collection traditionally showcase the viola's gifts for projecting the plaintive and rueful. Two fairly passive contemporary pieces, Augusta Read Thomas's *Song Without Words* and Bright Sheng's *The Stream Flows*, pleasantly tickle the ears. But it's left to Britten's Dowland-inspired *Lachrymae*, written for Primrose, to shower us with magic, right from the opening bars of limpid arpeggios, shivery tremblings and John Dowland's solemn melody crawling along at the piano's lower end. With music-making as succulent as this, who needs jollification anyway? *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Home

Works by Arlen, Barber, Kevin Puts, Caroline Shaw and George Walker
Miró Quartet
Pentatone PTC 5187 227 66:22 mins

One of the giants of US chamber music, the Miró Quartet formed in 1995 in Austin, Texas. With their recent discography spanning Schubert and a complete Beethoven cycle, their latest album represents a conscious artistic homecoming, with an all-American line-up from Pulitzer Prize-winning composers past and present.

In the liner notes to *Home* they reflect on their conceptual starting point as something central to our identities: 'our home can, for better or worse, shape and define us'. A place to belong, to leave, but never to take for granted.

The title work is by Kevin Puts, whose *Home* was written in response to images of Syrian refugees fleeing to Europe. From a safe, resolute C major curtain-raiser we are increasingly yanked further away from our familiar soundworld as Puts confronts the idea of how forced migration might feel. Caroline Shaw's *Microfictions* is a set of six miniatures inspired by the surrealist paintings of the quartet's

A fine homecoming: Miró Quartet performs an American programme

MICHAEL THAD CARTER

namesake, as well as the bitesized sci-fi published on Twitter by TR Darling. Described as 'an invitation to imagination', Shaw's stimulating tonal canvas shows off the quartet's colouristic dexterity, although our imaginative potential is left slightly short-changed by the duration of the pieces.

From the 20th century, we're treated to Samuel Barber's highly charged Quartet, with its agonising central *Adagio* linking to the lesser-known *Molto Adagio* by contemporary George Walker – a real lyrical highlight of the album which leaves you wanting more. The valedictory track brings fresh, if nostalgic, air – a charming arrangement of Harold Arlen's 'Over the Rainbow'. Altogether, this is a thoroughly compelling and thought-provoking collection of works, delivered with strong emotional commitment and finesse. *Amelia Parker*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Music for Flute by Women Composers

Works by Gipps, Harrison, Spain-Dunk et al
Anna Noakes (flute) et al
Dutton Epoch CDLX7409

Many of us sigh when we see a press release promoting a new album of women composers: is their gender all that unites them? Is it simply a desperate plea from the performer to perform lesser-recorded works, which actually don't have any kind of musical cohesion? It's a relief, therefore, when you find a recording like this, which brings together late 19th and early 20th-century works by female composers that truly work together in a thoughtful, considered manner. Flautist Anna Noakes has selected works – many of which are world-premiere recordings – whose tonalities and sonorities build perfectly from one to another, showcasing the flute in conversation with its piano counterpart.

There is a clear British identity throughout. Works by Susan Spain-Dunk and Pamela Harrison call to mind the composers' shared birthplace of Kent, while Ruth Gipps's *The St Francis Window* for the deep, full sound of the alto flute is based on a scene at an East Sussex church, near where she grew up. This is a musical chocolate box: short, whimsical works like Gipps's *Pixie Caravan* sit comfortably alongside Spain-Dunk's more dramatic, shimmering *The Water Lily Pool* overture.

While Noakes's sound is full-bodied and rich, there are moments the music calls for a lighter touch and for the musicians to lean into the witty, sparkling writing of some of these more lyrical works. That said, the bold, crisp playing captures the listener's attention and doesn't let it go right until the playful tango in Madeleine Dring's dynamic *Three Pieces*, the final flourish in this wide-reaching collection. *Freya Parr*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

The Pre-Raphaelite Cello

Works by Becker, Grainger, Knorr, Quilter and Scott
Adrian Bradbury (cello); Andrew West (piano)
SOMM SOMMCD 0685 73:18 mins

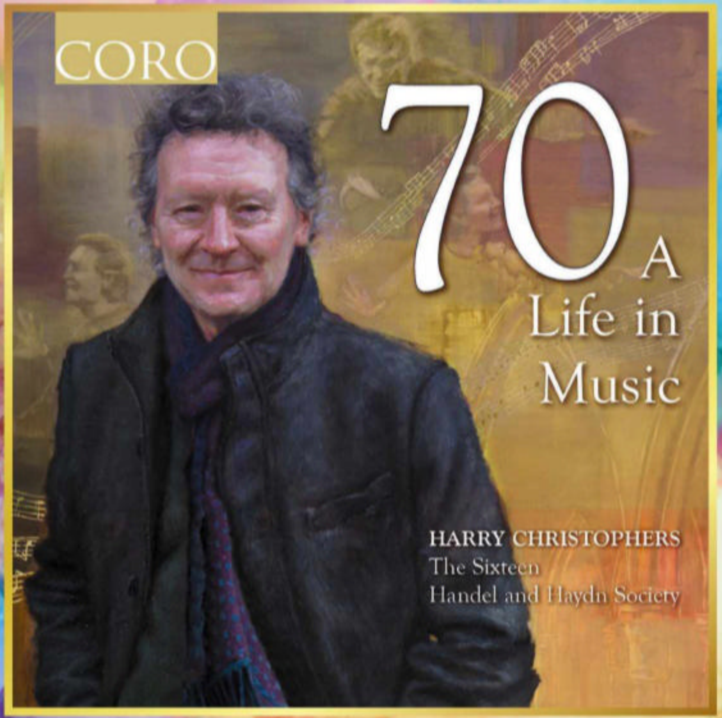
As titles go *The Pre-Raphaelite Cello* exudes an undeniable allure. But is it a bit of a red herring? Percy Grainger applied the painterly epithet to a bunch of mostly English composers associated with the Frankfurt Conservatory, and included himself in the so-called 'Frankfurt Gang', but the parallels were left somewhat nebulous, even if Cyril Scott declared his goal was to invent 'a new species of Pre-Raphaelite music'. Ardent champion of the group, cellist Beatrice Harrison provides the glue in this adroitly-interwoven programme that both celebrates their music and marks the centenary of the cellist's BBC broadcast from her garden duetting with a nightingale – a radio landmark that, it seems, was not everything it purported to be!

Setting the scene are works by two members of the Frankfurt teaching staff. Iwan Knorr's *Variations* are perfectly well-made if compositionally under-seasoned, while Harrison's cello professor, Hugo Becker, is represented by a couple of tender if inconsequential *billets-doux*. Repurposed by several arrangers, the charm is compounded by Roger Quilter whose reworking of *L'Amour de moy* serendipitously addresses the nightingale anniversary.

For all Adrian Bradbury's richly seductive tone, stylistic sensitivity and evident affection for the music (not to mention pianist Andrew West's illuminating rapport), it's with the Cyril Scott tracks that the album comes most vividly to life. *Pierrot amoureux* ups the ambition; exotic pizzicatos and troubled arabesques launch the largely unaccompanied *Pastoral and Reel*; and the duo modulates effortlessly between the introspection and muscular rousings of the *Ballade*. Grainger bags the last word with a languorous dry run for *Handel in the Strand*, and an unexpectedly noble nod to Christmas. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

CORO



A collection marking Harry Christophers' 70th birthday
and featuring tracks personally chosen by the conductor
www.thesixteenshop.com

Released to mark the composer's centenary year, this album of Stanford's Orchestral Songs features a wide selection of colourful and inventive orchestrations he made of his own songs and arrangements of Irish folk melodies for the concert hall.

Featuring the BBC Concert Orchestra, conductor John Andrews leads the ensemble and soloists Sharon Carty and Morgan Pearse in this idiom with which Stanford felt a special affinity.

Gabriel Fauré: Complete Works for Cello & Piano
Robin Michael (cello), Daniel Tong (piano)
Released July '24

Francis Poulenc: Les œuvres de sa jeunesse
Sam Alexander (actor), Soraya Mafi (soprano)
Julien Van Mellaerts (baritone), Lawrence Zazzo (countertenor), Manchester Camerata, John Andrews (conductor)

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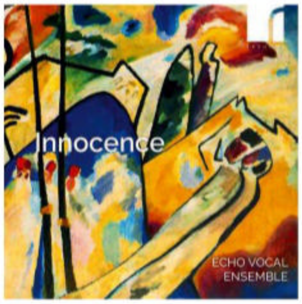
INVENTA



Innocence
Echo Vocal Ensemble, Sarah Latto (director)
Released July '24

The Madrigal Reimagined
Monteverdi String Band, Hannah Ely (soprano),
Toby Carr (lute), Oliver Webber (violin & director)

Johann Ludwig Krebs: Keyboard Works Vol. 4
Steven Devine (harpsichord)
Released July '24

M.R. Coelho: Flores de musica Vol. 3
Ana Mafalda Castro (harpsichord)

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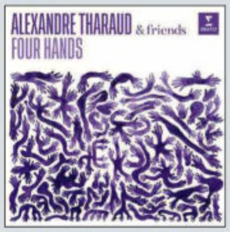
Instrumental

INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE



A joyful collection of lost four-hand piano treasures

Michael Church **is charmed by this rich selection performed by Alexandre Tharaud and 22 friends**

Piano pals: Vanessa Wagner and Alexandre Tharaud perform Philip Glass

Four Hands

Works by Brahms, Ravel, Fauré et al
Alexandre Tharaud & Friends (piano)
Erato 5419793352 63:31 mins

In this charming box of surprises, Alexandre Tharaud ropes in 22 friends to showcase the marvels of the four-hand piano repertoire. Its heyday was the mid-19th century, when middle class families played music at home: for most it was the only way they would ever hear orchestral works – recording hadn't been invented. Four-hand pianism today survives mostly in music schools, or in families when piano-playing siblings are induced to show off.

Yet as Tharaud points out in his liner note, this is the most intimate form of chamber music: there's something very sensual, he says, about your proximity, which allows you to experience the most secret, and most profound aspects of your partner's character.

He's brought together many generations, and many long-standing friends from his time at the Paris Conservatoire, and he's even included some who are not professional pianists at all (Gautier Capuçon and Philippe Jaroussky). Some are young stars, and a few hide coyly behind pseudonyms ('Mr Nobody'). But all play with professional polish.

One of Tharaud's aims is to reveal repertoire which has been largely lost, and in this respect he is resoundingly successful. Piano teachers, and pairs of soloists looking for suitable encore material, will find riches here. Kurtág's arrangement of a Bach chorale is one notable *trouvaille*, and Bizet's arrangement of Schumann's *Étude en forme de canon* in A flat is another; Rachmaninov's take on Tchaikovsky's Waltz from *The Sleeping Beauty*, and Philip Glass's darkly-driven *Stokes* are two more. Everything here has charm, and radiates what should always be the mainspring for chamber music: sheer joy in making it.

> Some of the players are young stars, and a few hide coyly behind pseudonyms

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Albéniz • Granados

Granados: Goyescas, Book 1;
Albéniz: Iberia, Books 1 & 2
Peter Donohoe (piano)
Chandos CHAN 20293 73:50 mins

For French musicians in the early 20th century – not least Debussy – Albéniz's music captured the essence of his native Spain. Already a celebrated piano virtuoso, his credentials as one of Paris's most exciting composers of the 1900s was established with the four books of *Iberia* composed between 1905 and 1909 in which Spain and Spanish life are glimpsed through a seductive haze of Impressionist texture. Alongside the native accent, astringent modernist harmony adds spice to the dance and folk-inspired numbers like 'Rondeña' and 'Triana' which open and close book two. The *Goyescas* by Albéniz's good friend Granados are, if anything, more overtly picturesque evoking Goya's 1790s portrait paintings coloured further by grief over the death of Albéniz and a distressing episode of civil unrest in Barcelona.

Peter Donohoe may, by his own admission, have come to this repertoire relatively late, but informed by his experience as a player of Debussy and Ravel, these fine renditions are convincingly idiomatic throughout. His performance of 'Evocación' is a perfect introduction, drawing the listener into the narrative with magical control of timing and rubato. As impressive is his approach in the more outgoing, dance-based pieces such as Albéniz's breezy 'Triana' and Granados's 'El Fandango del Candil'. Best of all is the way he captures the multi-dimensional character of Albéniz's 'Fête-dieu à Séville', a celebration of a religious procession and all the excitement surrounding it. The recording might have been a little more resonant, but this barely detracts from a splendid account of this captivating music.
Jan Smaczny

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

JS Bach

The Art of Fugue
Aapo Häkkinen (harpsichord)
Ondine ODE 1437-2 80:49 mins

Bach's so-called *The Art of Fugue* is both a mystery and a triumph. Composed during the last decade of his life, this group of fugues was the climax of his fascination with complex counterpoint. The mystery derives from the fact that Bach died as the work was being prepared for publication resulting in a somewhat unsatisfactory miscellany including an unfinished final fugue and a chorale prelude. Nevertheless, even in its incomplete state, it is one of the 18th century's greatest musical and intellectual landmarks.

Aapo Häkkinen provides a rational new ordering of movements and takes the entirely sensible decision to arrange Contrapunctus 12, beyond realistic keyboard performance, for viol consort and Contrapunctus 13 for violin and harpsichord. His expressive use of rhythmic nuance and persuasive phrasing, aided by the judicious spreading of chords, results in an approach that is consistently illuminating while avoiding any hint of dry academicism. The pacing is beautiful, notably in the highly expressive Contrapunctus 4 and in No. 8 where he balances the brilliance of French Overture style with contrapuntal clarity. The two movements for instruments are hugely enjoyable with poised, stylish playing from the viol consort and an almost rollicking rendition of Contrapunctus 13. Recorded in a generous acoustic, Häkkinen plays on a fine-sounding, slightly expanded Flemish harpsichord. While not the final word on this extraordinary work, this engaging performance communicates a huge amount of enjoyment while respecting the rigorous integrity of Bach's masterpiece. *Jan Smaczny*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

JS Bach

Cello Suites (Six Shades of Bach)
Max Lilja (cello; electronics)
Pentatone PTC 5187 204 81:05 mins

Max Lilja, founding member of Finnish rock band Apocalyptica, has created an electronic score to go alongside Bach's Cello Suites. Revisiting Bach's masterworks and forging a new path seems like an exciting project, particularly given that his music is a blank canvas which can accommodate many treatments. Here Lilja adds electronic echoes, whispers or drones to the invention, in a soundworld that travels in tandem with the score.

The opening *Prelude* to the First Suite is a harmonic composition rather than melodic. Thus, underpinning this aspect is crucial, though much of Lilja's drone seems to counter the logic of Bach's keys. An annoying bell-like sound with disconnected held pitches adorns the ensuing *Allemande*, while the opening of the Second Suite opts for echoes, before a higher pitch sound cloys its way into the texture. The second *Minuet* in this Suite offers random electronic blips while the 4th Suite *Prelude* is given over to pizzicato accompanied by a 'sea-world' like static chord accompanying-a timbre which persists throughout other movements. Lilja labels the Fifth Suite 'Death', and the gasping depiction of the opening is quite effective. However, the *Giga* dance in the middle of this movement is treated to interjected arbitrary notes before the invention becomes submerged – an effect that continues into the Sixth Suite.

Described as being designed to be an 'immersive experience', Lilja's conception misses connection and 'raison d'être' within Bach's compositional process for this to have currency. But what of the cello performance? Missing much characterisation, his interpretation seems two dimensional. There is far too much disconnected *détaché* bowing, little observation of phrase contouring, or pointing of the harmonic shifts. Rather disappointingly, this experience seems profoundly flawed. *Jo Talbot*

PERFORMANCE ★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Chopin

Études, Opp 10 & 25
Yunchan Lim (piano)
Decca 487 0122 57 mins

Daring debut: pianist Yunchan Lim dazzles with his Chopin album

LISA MARIE MAZZUCCO

Hiding behind a curiously dark cover is the dazzling pianism of Yunchan Lim's studio debut. Aged just 18 when he won the Van Cliburn Competition in 2022, the South Korean pianist has lost no time in making another big statement with this release of the complete Chopin *Études*. Some extremely daring speeds guarantee excitement, pushing the technical limits in what are, of course, despite their generic title (*Études*, or Studies), so much more than technical exercises, yet he also finds great poetry. A feeling for the transitions from one piece to another suggests that he is aware of them collectively, not as individual miniatures. And though he clearly knows all about this music's greatest interpreters, he doesn't mimic them.

Indeed, the imagery he suggests in the liner notes is original and maybe sometimes fanciful. Conjuring up 'the world's tiniest moth' in Op. 10 No. 2 is uncontroversial, but connecting Op. 10 No. 12 to the rage of the Greeks over the abduction of Helen changes the usual 'Revolutionary' slant. He plays the final pieces of Op. 25 as he describes them: 'songs heading towards the end of the world'.

Yunchan Lim is not the only exciting young competition winner to have recorded the *Études* early on — Maurizio Pollini was also 18 when he hot-footed it from Warsaw's 1960 Chopin Competition to the recording studio for the *Études* (now on Testament). Next to Pollini's classical restraint, some of Yunchan Lim's interpretations may be too subjective for everyone's taste, yet this is a remarkable feat that demands to be heard. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Liszt

Années de pèlerinage – excerpt; Harmonies poétiques et religieuses – excerpt; Piano Sonata in B minor;
Emmanuel Despax (piano)
Signum Classics SIGCD798
90:51 mins (2CD)

Sunlight and shadows play across the cover of this album, with Emmanuel Despax cutting quite the Lisztian dash as he mimics a famous oil painting of the Romantic virtuoso, wearing dark clothes with crossed arms and direct stare. And we're straight into deep, serious waters with 'Après une lecture de Dante', dramatic tritones sending us into a hellish realm, later countered by passages of heavenly beauty. Despax weaves its magic with powerful, velvety touch.

After such drama, the 'Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude' is a welcome contrast, especially when its line is spun out with such serene beauty as here, its interest sustained across its 20-minute span with playing of poetry and tenderness. But we're soon back with the darkness in 'Funérailles', written in memory of three of Liszt's late friends and Chopin, and Despax summons up the demons.

If the uneasy spirits were unleashed in 'Funérailles', they wander lost through the unsettling 'Nuages gris', an experiment in augmented intervals and spare textures from Liszt's later years. This is music that has often been said to point to the future and Despax taps into its untethered, questing nature. But the album culminates with his masterpiece from 30 years earlier, the Piano Sonata in B minor. Across its unbroken half-hour stretch, thickets of notes and thematic transformations, he proves an unerring guide. And as elsewhere in this programme, it's all about the balance and contrast between the light and dark, angels and devils, heaven and hell. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Messiaen

Livre du Saint Sacrement
Loïc Mallié (organ)
Edition Hortus 234-235 117:27 mins (2CD)

Livre du Saint Sacrement was intentionally Messiaen's final statement for the organ. Written in 1984, this 18-movement exploration of the Eucharist ranges from narrative and pictorial scenes to explorations of abstruse theological concepts as well as straightforward moments of devotion. Messiaen threw everything into this organ summa resulting in a vast work that is, by turns, gentle, powerful, strange, charming, exhilarating, meditative and dazzling.

This is the third recording of the *Livre* made on the magnificent Cavaillé-Coll instrument at Messiaen's own church of Sainte Trinité, Paris, the first being Jennifer Bate's iconic version overseen by the composer. Loïc Mallié has his own strong pedigree, having been a Messiaen student, one of his successors at the Trinité, and a fine composer in his own right. His approach to the *Livre* is also distinctive, underlined by his taking around half-an-hour less than Bate. Not that there is a lack of poise. 'L'institution de l'Eucharistie', for instance, is beautifully reverent bathed in the Trinité organ's sonorities, while the formidable forces of 'Les deux murailles d'eau' are suitably imposing. A little more space would be welcome at times, especially in the long extended

Works to discover: Fabio Biondi makes a case for Johann Helmich Roman's violin music

ALAN GELATI

lines of melody, such as in the glowing calm of 'Prière après la Communion', but the numerous instances of birdsong are wonderfully agile.

There is a substantial bonus in the form of an 18-minute improvisation by Mallié himself. Gradually building from the most delicate murmurings to an impressive climax, it is compelling, but would surely have been better placed before the *Livre* rather than within a few seconds of its conclusion. Nonetheless, this set demands the attention of anyone interested in Messiaen's organ music. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Roman

Assaggi Per Violino Solo
Fabio Biondi (violin)
Naïve V8209 70 mins

Justifiably dubbed the father of Swedish music, Johann Helmich Roman was the leading figure in Sweden's early musical history. During two visits to London he met Handel whose music had a decisive influence on his vocal and instrumental style. Roman also travelled to France, Italy, Austria and Germany numbering Tartini, Telemann and Pisendel among his acquaintances. It was these composers, rather than Handel who probably triggered Roman's *Assaggi* for unaccompanied violin. The essays featured here are best understood as fantasias in three or four short movements, rather in the manner of Telemann's pieces for solo violin.

Readers familiar with Roman's music will only infrequently discern that blend of Baroque and Early Classical idiom which characterises his sinfonias, concertos and orchestral anthologies. Indeed, any distinctive prototype is hard to discern, the linear conception of Bach feeling especially distant. Fabio Biondi realises both the technical and expressive potential of his chosen selection of *Assaggi* with assurance. Several of the movements require double-stopping and a degree of virtuosity which often exceeds Telemann's requirements, while more closely matching some of Tartini's sonatas. Both composers perhaps provided Roman with vital stimulus. Biondi makes a strong case for affording this music greater prominence than it has so far enjoyed, communicating its melodic charm with affection and stylistic aplomb. His light bowing and gently inflected phrasing are a delight and serve the music well, as we can hear in the attractive opening movement of the C major *Assaggio* and throughout the substantial A major one where Tartini readily comes to mind. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Virtuoso Harpsichord Music

Works by JS Bach, Byrd et al
Melody Lin (harpsichord)
CRD CRD3546 51:30 mins

As a musical box of tricks, the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book is hard to beat, with a hoard of almost 300 Elizabethan and Jacobean keyboard pieces which are still yielding surprises. Some of these surprises come courtesy of the pianist-turned-harpsichordist Melody Lin, in a debut containing some of the most technically difficult pieces in the repertoire.

Lin prefaces her liner notes with an account of two key relationships – with the harpsichord, and with her tutor at Claremont Graduate University, Robert Zappulla, who has been the producer of this recording. She had begun as a pianist, but had been enchanted by the harpsichord's 'special sound', and in particular with the sound of the instrument on which this album was recorded. It was made by William Dowd in 1982, based on the design of an instrument made by the celebrated instrument-builders Nicolas and Francois Étienne Blanchet in Paris in 1730, and its sound does indeed have a wonderfully warm resonance.

The first piece is by Giles Farnaby, a joiner by trade whose specialism lay in his sets of variations on folk tunes, of which those on 'Woodycock' were the most imposing. This work is apparently often set as a competition piece because of its difficulty, but Lin sails through it with easy aplomb.

Then, with sweeping grandeur, comes William Byrd's Fantasia in A minor, to be followed by JS Bach's Toccata in D major, and one can imagine the master gloating over the technical challenges of that exuberantly fantastical piece. The rest of the programme dwells in France, first with Rameau's 'Les Cyclopes', then with a series of character pieces conceived for the viol then arranged for the harpsichord by their prolific composer Antoine Forqueray.

So, two discoveries: a clutch of refreshingly unfamiliar works, and an impressive new contender on the instrument. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Barry Witherden's selection features classic live sets and nature-inspired music

July round-up

Arguably John Coltrane is revered as much as a spiritual mentor as a musician. His widow, ***Alice Coltrane*** followed a similar path. Not long after ***The Carnegie Hall Concert 1971*** she began to gradually withdraw from the jazz scene, setting up a Vedantic Centre in California. For me, this is one of her most enthralling performances, with fine support from an all-star band, including Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Jimmy Garrison and Ed Blackwell. The first disc offers pieces from her post-John repertoire, while the second features tunes that he recorded, and which are given intense, almost intimidating work-outs. *(Impulse! 4588286)* ★★★★★

A fan of ***Charles Lloyd*** since the mid-'60s, I have enjoyed following his work as it continuously developed and refined. As demonstrated at last year's London Jazz Festival, his playing remains intensely personal while maintaining essential roots referencing John Coltrane and the blues. ***The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow*** had its genesis in 2020 when Lloyd was distressed by Covid-dictated isolation and the widespread rise of violence, but against this ugliness he created a rich, beautiful programme of inspiring music in sensitive empathy with pianist Jason Moran, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Brian Blade. *(Blue Note 4581679)* ★★★★★

I once made ***Maridalen***'s 2022 album *Bortenfor* my pick of the month, and the latest, ***Gressholmen***, came close to joining it. The basic trio is again augmented by Emil Brattested (pedal steel) plus Erland Dahlen (percussion, saw, dulcimer) without any disturbance to its customary hermetic soundworld. All the tracks, whatever their mood, subject or inspiration, exhibit a delicacy, grace and a captivating atmosphere underpinned by an essential strength. Comparisons with Norwegian landscapes may be facile but, having previously recorded in the wooden church at Maridalen, the group moved to Gressholmen island for this album. One track, 'Innront', references an offshore wind but the word can also mean 'something from within', characterising their music pretty well. *(Jazzland 3779618)* ★★★★★

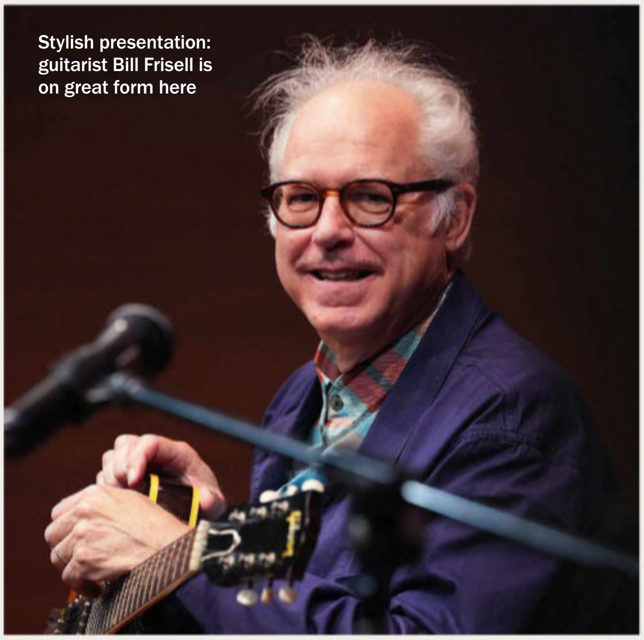
Nature Is A Mother by the ***Charlie Pyne Quartet*** is bassist-singer-composer Pyne's admirable second album as leader, although she has recorded with other bands and worked with such luminaries as Zoe Rahman, Brigitte Beraha, Nikki Iles and Martin France. Here she is joined by saxophonist Luke Pinkstone, pianist Liam Dunachie and drummer Katie Patterson for a set of her consistently engaging and engrossing compositions, mostly designed with Pinkstone in mind but prompting excellent work by everyone, not least herself. They vividly evoke some of the varied qualities of Mother Nature, from nurturing to disquieting but always meriting respect, as does this music. *(33 Records 33JAZZ302)* ★★★★★

A Night at the Village Vanguard dates from around 17 months after the legendary album *Saxophone Colossus*, when ***Sonny Rollins*** had no need to prove anything, but went ahead and proved it anyway. On *Colossus* he demonstrated a mastery of musical architecture and elegant design but here cuts loose and flaunts his virtuosity and ability to stir up excitement. A colossal genius indeed. This release includes everything Rollins recorded on 3 November 1957, the first time all the performances have been issued. *(Blue Note 6512251)* ★★★★★

JAZZ CHOICE

Orchestral jazz delights

Bill Frisell works on a broader canvas for this elegant selection with a symphonic palette


Stylish presentation: guitarist Bill Frisell is on great form here

GETTY

Bill Frisell

Orchestras

Bill Frisell (electric guitar); Thomas Morgan (bass); Rudy Royston (drums); Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra; Umbria Jazz Orchestra

Blue Note 4588374

Over the years Bill Frisell has convincingly embraced styles and genres as diverse as thrash-metal (with John Zorn's *Naked City*) and country music, creating his own brand of Americana along the way. His core work in more-or-less-mainstream jazz has also pushed at boundaries – including with a wonderful quartet led by Paul Bley – yet has been consistently characterised by a pellucid, liquid tone and languid yet sinewy phrasing. It is a sound that has called on electronic effects but always exhibits a thoroughly human quality. On this stylishly-packaged two-LP release he presents a programme of excellent compositions (mostly arranged by Michael Gibbs) by Billy Strayhorn, Ron Carter and Stephen Foster as well as originals by Gibbs and Frisell themselves, plus a lovely version of 'We Shall Overcome'. Always elegant, never effete, Frisell is on great form and is well-served by the arrangements and by the performances of his trio and the orchestras. The album is an utter delight from the start of the first track (Gibbs's mysterious 'Nocturne Vulgaire' – almost symphonic despite its brevity) to the end of track 16 (that heartfelt reading of 'We Shall Overcome'.) ★★★★★

Brief notes

This month's choices include crossover works, choral heft and a dazzling debut

Bartók The Wooden Prince, Divertimento and Romanian Folk Dances
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Thomas Dausgaard
Onyx ONYX4233

Though *The Wooden Prince* is generally performed in its full-length version, this recording reflects the composer's desire to lose much of the music relating to specific stage cues. It's a good decision that makes for a tighter, more potent experience. The orchestra conveys a satisfyingly dark heft – and the *Romanian Dances* are also a joy. (CS) ★★★★

Brahms • Cherubini • Mozart Requiems
Klassische Philharmonie Stuttgart et al/Frieder Bernius
Carus CAR83054

Three big hitters of the requiem repertoire, varying markedly in style, in one set. All are performed with considerable polish, though the strict mathematical precision of Frieder Bernius's approach sometimes comes at the cost of sheer visceral thrill. Of the three, the Cherubini comes off the strongest. (JP) ★★★

Damase Symphonie; Piano Concerto No. 2; Flute Concerto
Ashley Wass (piano), Anna Noakes (flute); BBC Concert Orchestra/Martin Yates
Dutton Epoch CDLX7309

With a spread of more than 50 years – from the 1948 Rhapsody for oboe and strings to 1999's Double Concerto for trumpet, piano and strings – this is a fine way to get to know a French composer who could combine winsome charm with dark intensity in the space of a few bars. The agile soloists all do the music proud. (JP) ★★★★

Joseph Horovitz Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo
Roderick Williams (baritone); City of London Choir/Hilary Davan Wetton
Orchid Classics ORC100293

With the King's Singers' 1972 recording now hard to get hold of, this is a welcome release. Baritone Roderick Williams does a fine job as narrator and God, though judging by the po-faced delivery, Michael Flanders's witty words appear to have fallen flat with the singers of the City of London Choir. Yes, it's about rain – but it should still be fun. (JP) ★★★

Bill Laurance Bloom
Bill Laurance (keyboards); Untold Orchestra
ACT ACT 9059-2 CD

Laurance deftly walks the line between jazz and classical idioms in this breezy set of works for piano/keyboards and the strings of Manchester's Untold Orchestra. There's a pop sensibility to the arrangements and a keen rhythmic drive from the strings. Hugely enjoyable. (MB) ★★★★

Frederick Laurence Piano and Chamber Works
Jack Liebeck (violin), Anna Tilbrook (piano)
Orchid Classics ORC100284

Frederick Laurence was a British composer of German heritage writing in the early 20th century who, at the end of the First World War, changed his name from Kessler. Liebeck and Tilbrook are sensitive advocates for works regarded at the time as harmonically 'experimental', but which demonstrate a lovely, impressionistic lushness and commitment to exploration. (CS) ★★★★

Dan Locklair From East to West and Other Choral Works
Choir of Royal Holloway/David Goode; Onyx Brass/Rupert Gough
Convivium CR094

There's a breathtaking heft to the works which bookend this selection – the title work and the closing *The Texture of Creation*, thanks to the addition of the brilliant Onyx Brass. American composer Locklair really knows how to pack a punch, even without such adornments; the Royal Holloway singers shine in what is a largely *cappella* programme. Divine. (MB) ★★★★

Spellbinding sounds: Viktor Orri Árnason conducts Gabríel Ólafs

Gabríel Ólafs Orchestral Works
Reykjavík Orkestra/Viktor Orri Árnason
Decca 487 6248

At 25, Icelandic composer Ólafs is still something of a wunderkind and here cements his place as one of the most talented of the post-classical generation. If you're already a fan of his chamber works, or the original *Solon Islandus*, these iterations for larger symphonic canvas will leave you spellbound. The opening *Melodia Suite* is a particular highlight. (MB) ★★★★★

Rachmaninov Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 3
Anna Fedorova (piano); Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie/Laërcio Diniz, Gerard Oskamp
Brilliant Classics 97298

Recorded in 2014, at a relatively early stage in Ukrainian pianist Fedorova's career, these assured performances of two concerto greats demonstrate her considerable technical skill and undoubted affinity with this lush and passionate repertoire. Her playing is bold and flexible, but also hushed and gentle where required – and she's well supported by the Nordwestdeutsche orchestral forces. (CS) ★★★★

Ten Holt Canto Ostinato
Aart Bergwerff (organ), Eric Vloeimans (trumpet) *Brilliant Classics 97409*

Talk about hypnotic. This 2023 live take on Simeon Ten Holt's modern masterpiece sees Eric Vloeimans's lilting solo trumpet float atop the thrillingly incessant organ undulations of Aart Bergwerff. It's a work that has been reimagined endlessly over the years, and this version is surely up there with the most enthralling. (MB) ★★★★

Turina Works for strings
Concerto Málaga/Gil de Gálvez
Naxos 8.573391

Confidence and class: Ensemble Altera's debut is superb

Turina's desire to champion the culture of his Spanish homeland is strongly in evidence in an engaging programme that includes *The Bullfighter's Prayer* and movements from *La musas de Andalucía* and *Seville* among others. Concerto Málaga's earthy style suits the music's rusticity well, though the more beatific 'Aparición del Arcángel' is also lovely. (JP) ★★★★

Ysaÿe Six Sonatas for solo violin
Sergey Khachatryan (violin)
Naïve V5451

Performed on Ysaÿe's own Guarneri del Gesù, this recording by multi-prize-winning Armenian violinist Khachatryan certainly has pedigree. Intended as a homage to Bach's Solo Violin Sonatas, Ysaÿe's works traverse a staggering range of violin techniques – a virtuosic challenge which Khachatryan meets in interpretations of grit and flair. Throughout, there's a feeling of grown-on-the-vine naturalness. A triumph. (CS) ★★★★★

Death Song Book Reimagined works by Bowie, Brel, Suede et al
Brett Anderson et al; Paraorchestra/Charles Hazlewood
BMG/World Circuit 5053897804

This collaboration between Suede frontman Brett Anderson and Charles Hazlewood's Paraorchestra tackles themes of death, loss and anxiety. Featuring orchestral arrangements by Charlotte Harding, the album fuses pop by the likes of Depeche Mode and Echo and the Bunnymen with a classical sensibility, and showcases delightfully surprising instrumental voices in a haze of warm reverb. (CS) ★★★

The Lamb's Journey A Choral Narrative from Gibbons to Barber
Ensemble Altera/Christopher Lowrey
Alpha Classics ALPHA1029

With music ranging from the Renaissance to the present and from across several countries, the American Ensemble Altera's debut album is a superb showcase. Clean as a whistle and confident in exposed moments such as in Poulenc's Agnus Dei, and immaculately balanced in richly scored textures elsewhere, the singing is terrific throughout. (JP) ★★★★★

Metamorphosis Works by Strauss, Vivier, Oliver Leith and Edmund Finnis
Eloisa-Fleur Thom (violin);12 Ensemble
Platoon Music STUDIOXII-01DS1

Paradoxically, at the centre of this thoroughly modern album is Strauss's epic *Metamorphosen*, composed at the close of the Second World War – but certainly, Strauss was pushing harmonic boundaries. The digitised sheen to 12 Ensemble's conductorless string sound works well for the more recent works, but I miss raw and gritty emotion in the Strauss. (CS) ★★★★

Sea of Stars Works by JS Bach, Ravel, Grace-Evangeline Mason, Lauren Scott et al
Lauren Scott (harp)
Avie AV2675

Think you know the harp? Think again. Scott uses both pedal and lever harps for this set of works, including standout ones she composed herself. She is joined by three other harpsists for *The Sun and Her Flowers*, while the likes of Monika Stadler's *No One Can Stop Me Now* features prepared pedal harp. The results are somewhat revelatory; beautiful, raw and rhythmic. (MB) ★★★★★

Stairway to Bach Rock Classics with a Hint of Bach (arr. Sven-Ingvart Mikkelsen)
Sven-Ingvart Mikkelsen (organ)
OUR Recordings 8.22692

With the likes of 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and 'Stairway to Heaven' on the pipe organ, it's safe to say this album is a little bit of a gimmick; but there's no doubting the success of the majority of these intuitive arrangements and performances by Mikkelsen, who occasionally dazzles on the organ of the Royal Danish Academy of Music. Rock on. (MB) ★★★

Walking the Dog Works by Gershwin, Prokofiev, Milhaud et al
Andreas Mader (saxophone), Joseph Moog (piano)
Naïve V8453

A heartily enthusiastic 'woof' for this one. After a deft arrangement of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Mader and Moog take us on an enjoyable early-20th-century amble in the company of Lili Boulanger, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Françaix and Ravel, with agile playing that feels generally at ease but always up for a quick scamper into the undergrowth. (JP) ★★★★

Michael Beek (MB), Jeremy Pound (JP), Charlotte Smith (CS)

Triumphant Ysaÿe: Sergey Khachatryan performs solo works with grit and flair

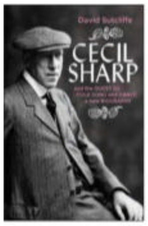
JANET MOSCARELLO, V&A, MARCO BORGGREVE

Books

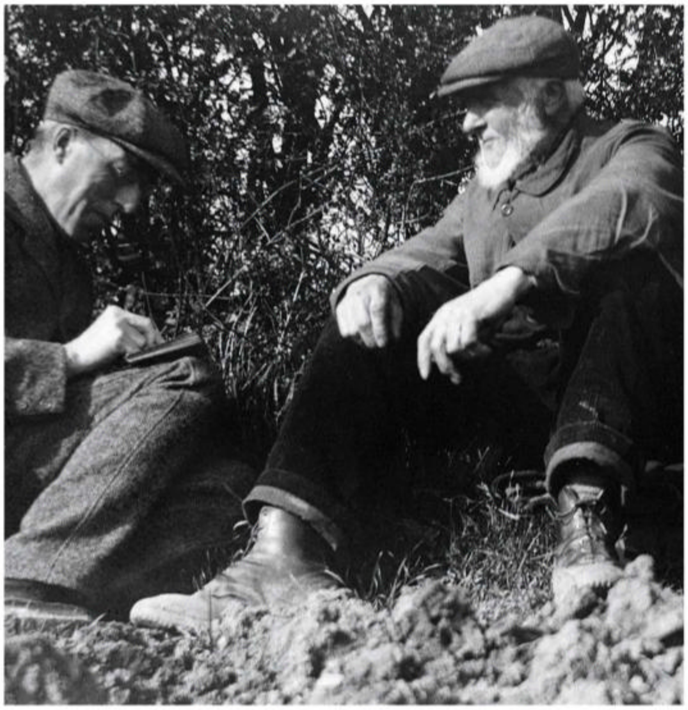
Our critics cast their eyes over the latest selection of books on all things music

Cecil Sharp and the Quest for Folk Song and Dance
David Sutcliffe
Ballad Partners 497pp (pb) £20

At the centenary of Cecil Sharp's death, here's a long overdue modern



assessment of the legendary folk music collector's life and work. David Sutcliffe, a folk singer himself, does an immaculate job of showcasing someone who's languished as some kind of 'unknown known'. Yet Sharp, as Sutcliffe demonstrates, was the very opposite of monochrome. His boundless enthusiasm for the tasks he set himself made him the most prolific of all British folk music collectors and champions. As well as making reference to how classical composers have borrowed Sharp-harvested tunes, Sutcliffe also shows how the act of gathering and publishing this material was underpinned by Sharp's classical music training. Indeed, Sutcliffe travelled to Australia to research the formative years his subject spent there as a pianist, violinist and conductor. This is no purely adulatory exercise, though, and Sutcliffe assesses brickbats that have been hurled at Sharp's method and working mindset. A pity there's no examination of his ongoing legacy, but there should be no disincentive to sampling this engagingly told tale. *Andrew Green* ★★★★★



Folk-finding mission: Cecil Sharp (left) travelled near and far to collect folk tunes

GETTY

The Gothic Imagination in the Music of Franz Schubert
Joe Davies
Boydell Press 196pp (hb) £70

This forensic study of Schubert's 'gothic necropoetics' – artistic contemplations of death and its associations of eeriness, night and the supernatural – is a thought-provoking read that sheds light upon the darkest side of the composer's work. Listening to or playing works such as the C minor *Impromptu*, the *Klavierstücke*, D946 or the final sonatas, besides *Schwanengesang* or *Erlkönig*, we might often sense a bridge between worlds real and ghostly, or the 'grotesque' element of violent contrast in the C major String Quintet or the 'Wanderer'

Fantasy, but Joe Davies illuminates exactly what Schubert is doing, and how he does it, with considerable eloquence.

It is a masterclass in Schubert's affinity for this cultural movement, an awareness of which could benefit many a musician's interpretations. Relating Schubert to literary figures of the early Romantic era like Goethe, Schiller and Jean Paul provides essential context, and nowadays it is refreshing to find a book that overflows with music examples (if also with space-guzzling footnotes). The exploration is very much about the music itself, along with its cultural hinterland; a little bit more on why Schubert chose to immerse himself in this aesthetic would also have been welcome. *Jessica Duchen* ★★★★

My Life in Music
Antonio Pappano
Faber 289pp (hb) £25

It was portentous that, as a child, Antonio Pappano used to take the number 88 bus to the rehearsal studios where his father taught singing. There, the young Pappano would play the piano, learning the tools for what would go on to

become his trade. In *My Life in Music*, Pappano, best-known for his decades-long role as music director of the Royal Opera, covers his journey to Covent Garden via stints as a *répétiteur*, prompter and Daniel Barenboim's assistant. The focus is strictly musical, although there are breadcrumbs of autobiography: a complex relationship with his family (his father never understood Pappano's interest beyond Italian greats) and the revelation that he was treated for stomach ulcers shortly after conducting *Tristan and Isolde* (perhaps his father had a point).

There are reflections on stagings that worked – a *Wozzeck* in which a singer was underwater – and those that didn't, like the *William Tell* featuring mounds of soil that screwed the acoustics. Throughout this dive into the pensieve, Pappano is unwaveringly modest, seemingly the antithesis of the *Tár* maestro caricature. It all bodes very well for the London Symphony Orchestra, where Pappano will be soon be chief conductor. *Claire Jackson* ★★★★

The Performer – Art, Life, Politics
Richard Sennett
Allen Lane 246pp (hb) £25

In the first in a trilogy of books on performing, narrating and imaging, Richard Sennett explores the theory and history of performance and how the rituals of ordinary life mirror – or stray from – the art of performance in concert halls or theatres. The concept is as broad as the term 'performance' can be (and often broader still), with Sennett oscillating between personal anecdotes of seeing patients perform

Shakespeare on AIDS wards to a forensic dissection of the cult of personality seen in history's great performers, and the shift that took place from audiences basing their concert-going choices on the artist rather than the repertoire.

Across six chapters, Sennett breaks down performance as a social construct, the way it has evolved throughout history and what has influenced those changes. As much as he looks into the performer, he also examines the spectator and the interaction of the two. We touch on the aesthetic of performance: how Liszt would barely acknowledge his audience, while Wagner covered the orchestral pit with a leather hood to hide the music from the audience in his operas. From ancient Greece to the Covid era, the frame is large and the content intricate and enlightening. *Freya Parr* ★★★★

Audio choice

Chris Haslam, plus his nine-year-old daughter, test out the best hi-fi equipment

THIS MONTH: HEADPHONES FOR CHILDREN

Child's play: Belkin's Mini model

HARDY SPECIMENS

Belkin Soundform Mini £29

There's no active noise cancellation here, but these Bluetooth headphones are brilliant for younger kids who are less careful with their belongings. They're light, have a small, adjustable headband and cushioned earpads, and feel as if they'll survive any amount of abuse. They sound OK too – which isn't damning with faint praise, as they're not designed for junior audiophiles – and with a 30hr battery life and built-in microphone they're also compatible with early learning apps and games. A 3.5mm cable is included, and if you don't need wireless, there's a more basic wired design for £13. **belkin.com**

BUDDING LISTENERS

myFirst CareBuds £59

The myFirst Carebuds are extremely light, with a generous selection of child-sized ear tips that make finding a secure fit quick and easy. The sound is limited for safety, and they have an IPX4 rating that can survive a soaking in the rain. There's no active noise cancellation, but the buds do still block out a lot of sound. Touch controls make skipping tracks easy, and the Smart Transparency Mode is a sensible safety feature that kicks in when walking around, letting in outside noise. Battery life is six hours continuous, and 25 hours from the case. **myfirst.tech**

Mature sound: the PuroQuiet Plus boasts advanced audio in a smaller fit

BEST IN TEST

Puro Sound Labs PuroQuiet Plus £80

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE BEST BUY

Puro Sound Labs sells an impressive range of child-specific headphones that look and feel more grown-up than the rest. The PuroQuiet Plus is a proper wireless headphone – boasting good audio and Active Noise Cancellation (ANC) – that just happens to fit smaller heads. The black sample we tested looked great, and with a robust metal casing felt very solid without being bulky.

They are an expensive option, especially if you're shopping for more than one child, but with 82 per cent noise isolation they are ideal for car journeys, planes and, in our case, the rumble of the London Underground. By blocking out background noise, the volume needed to listen comfortably can be reduced (limited to 85dB for safety), but remember, it also means your children can't hear you. The battery life is solid – 16 hours using ANC and 200 hours on standby.

Sound quality from the 40mm drivers is good, and they're an enjoyable listen whatever age you are. Both the narration and orchestration of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* were well balanced and engaging – a relief, as most kids will be watching content as much as listening to music with them. Our one slight gripe, however, was the lack of skip/play controls on the earcups, something you'll typically find on similarly priced adult designs. **purosound.com**

NEED TO KNOW

Why choose child-specific headphones?
Children and teenagers have more delicate ears than grown-ups – the World Health Organisation recommends 85dB as a safe maximum noise level for up to eight hours. All the tested models have a limiter that maintains a safe volume.

What features are available?
You can find wired and wireless versions, on-ear, over-ear, earbuds and even bone-conduction designs. Active Noise Cancellation is useful if you travel a lot as a family. Audio quality isn't as important, however, with robust build, comfort and bright colours taking precedence.

How much should you spend?
At £80, the PuroQuiet Plus headphones are expensive, especially if you're buying multiples for siblings, but they do boast the best features and a more tween- and teen-friendly aesthetic. That said, in most instances, you don't need to spend more than £25-30.

From the archives

Andrew McGregor looks over this month's reissued and live archive recordings

ARCHIVE CHOICE

Tribute to a craftsman

The orchestral music of the late Anthony Payne is brought to life in impressive readings

Heartfelt handling: Martyn Brabbins conducts two of Payne's imaginative works

Payne

Visions and Journeys*; The Seeds Long Hidden; Half-Heard in Stillness

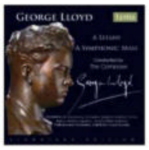
BBC Symphony Orchestra/Martyn Brabbins; *Andrew Davis

NMC NMC D281 62:15 mins

The piece that springs to mind when you hear the name Anthony Payne is probably a symphony by someone else. Payne was disconcerted by the popular success of his completion of Elgar's Third Symphony, but it's a testament to his strengths, and paradoxically, his individuality as a British composer born in the 1930s, building on the music he loved. *The Seeds Long Hidden* is a set of orchestral variations from the '90s, transfixed as a child by music on the radio (Brahms) and drawn into a magical landscape. This is Payne's musical biography, he tells us, ending as inexplicably as it began. *Half-Heard in the Stillness* is Payne's response to Elgar's *Memorial Chimes*, drawing out a haunting phrase and crafting a short tone poem that encompasses landscape, Elgarian nostalgia, and airborne vibrations. *Visions and Journeys* from 2002 evokes travels to the Scilly Isles; steam engines, boats and the ocean swell, plane journeys animated by the rushing strings of Holst's 'Mercury', interspersed with rapt contemplation and haunting shadows. Impressive playing from the BBC Symphony Orchestra for conductors Martyn Brabbins and Andrew Davis, and a heartfelt tribute to a craftsman whose orchestral imagination transfixes from beginning to end. ★★★★★

July round-up

George Lloyd's music is unashamedly romantic, derided in the late 20th century for its



conservatism, but I hope we've got over that and can appreciate the expressive beauty and emotional power of these major choral works from the 1990s. ***A Litany*** is a setting of the poem by John Donne, with glorious solos from Janice Watson, and the composer conducting Guildford Choral Society and the Philharmonia. ***A Symphonic Mass*** is fiercely exhilarating, warmly enveloping and hugely impressive. This is timeless music, whose time has surely come in these reissues of the Albany Records originals. *(Lyrita SRCD2419)* ★★★★

When ***Maurice Abravanel and the Utah Symphony Orchestra*** made their recordings of Grieg's orchestral music in the 1970s, there weren't many other options, and they made friends for Grieg's music outside of the all-pervasive Piano

Concerto and *Peer Gynt*. There are engaging performances of the *Symphonic Dances*, and a properly folksy *Bridal Procession*, but the rest of the album refuses to take flight, ending with a *Lyric Suite* that could be so much more feisty. The excellent remastering makes it impossible to ignore some sour string sounds and acidic oboe. *(Vox VOX-NX-3038CD)* ★★

Born in 1901, violinist ***René Benedetti*** was a child prodigy in Paris, had music written for him by the composers of 'Les Six' and was the first Frenchman to play the complete Paganini *Caprices* and solo Bach in concert. He mentored Neville Marriner, Christian Ferras and Jean-Jacques Kantorow – who calls Benedetti one of the best players of all time, with the technique of Heifetz, the charm of Thibaud and nothing to prove to the world. And here he is, in recordings from the '20s to the

'40s; exhilarating Wieniawski and Sarasate, poetic Kreisler, Milhaud, De Falla and a performance of Paganini's First Violin Concerto that cuts through the hiss with flair and fire. *(Biddulph 85046-2)* ★★★★

Shelley's gruesome play ***The Cenci*** was made opera by ***Havergal Brian*** in the early 1950s, but only premiered 25 years after his death in this Queen Elizabeth Hall concert. The darkness of the story is framed by a performance that reveals the shortcomings of the drama, despite the commitment of a quality cast led by Helen Field and David Wilson-Johnson, and conductor James Kelleher. Episodic, densely scored, uninspired text-setting with little

sense of emotional narrative, it falls flat despite the lurid fascination of this 16th-century tale of Roman depravity, and a touchingly effective ending. Decent recording and excellent presentation. *(Toccata Classics TOCC0094)* ★★★

Soprano ***Leontyne Price*** was inspired to sing as a nine-year-old, taken to hear Marian Anderson in concert, and made with her mother to sit in a 'blacks only' section of the audience to listen to a black woman sing. Despite discrimination, Price's spine-tingling voice could not be silenced, and this '***Personal Choice***' (presumably not hers) offers

bleeding chunks and highlights, ranging from *Aida* with Solti and *Turandot* with Karajan, to *Porgy and Bess*, spirituals and a radiant 'O Holy Night'. There's some audible electronic processing, but nothing that affects the emotional impact. A bargain introduction at budget price. *(Alto ALC1482)* ★★★★

Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday afternoon from 2pm-4pm

Hey Mr Producer: John Culshaw was behind some legendary classical recordings

GETTY

Unboxed

This month's round-up serves up Rattle's Berlin years, BBC archive classics and a great producer

While ***Simon Rattle*** is now focused on the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, his remarkable 18-year tenure (1994-2012) with the Berlin Philharmonic still lingers in the memory. ***The Berlin Years*** *(Warner Classics 5419768589)* is a 35-disc celebration of that period, which saw Rattle bring his trademark fastidiousness and flair for forward-thinking to the mightly Berliners, resulting in some truly sizzling symphonic moments and more than a few surprises along the way. This set is packed with classic takes on well-trodden repertoire, from Brahms's symphonies, Stravinsky's *Rite* and a stunning *Carmen*, while a complete *Nutcracker*, the 2006 commission *Asteroids* (featuring new works by the late Kaija Saariaho and Mark-Anthony Turnage) and a rare foray into film scoring (Tom Tykwer's effervescent 2006 score for *Perfume*) provide further delights. A ravishing set.

Leopold Stokowski is another conductor who needs little introduction, with a stellar career on the podium spanning some 60 years. ***Great Recordings from the BBC Legends Archive*** *(ICA Classics ICAB 5180)* takes in live recordings from the last years of those six decades. Across six discs we're taken from the 1963 BBC Proms – including the festival's first airing of Mahler 2, with the LSO – to a 1974 concert of works by Vaughan Williams, Ravel and Brahms, performed by the then 'New' Philharmonia Orchestra. Like everything ICA dust off from this collection, it's a cherishable set of recordings and the whole lot is newly remastered in line with the conductor's own recording preferences.

From legendary conductors to a legendary producer. ***John Culshaw – The Art of the Producer*** *(Decca 485 4973)* is a fascinating collection of recordings from early in the British producer's career. Best known perhaps for bringing us Decca's Solti *Ring* Cycle and Britten's *War Requiem*, Culshaw started out as a writer and found himself drawn to the recording studio. This 12-disc selection presents rarities from 1948-55, including the first studio recording of Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, an album of Copland played by the composer himself on piano, a recording of Clifford Curzon long thought lost and Georg Solti's 1954 recording of Brahms's Requiem. Unique and brilliant. ***Michael Beek***

Reviews Index

John Adams
Girls of the Golden West 80
Albéniz Iberia, Books 1 & 2 90
JS Bach The Art of Fugue 90
Cello Suites 91
Bartók Romanian Folk Dances 77
Viola Concerto 77
Violin Concerto 77
The Wooden Prince etc 94
Beethoven Folk Songs 77
Triple Concerto 77
Brahms
Piano Quartet No. 2 in A major 87
Requiem 94
Brian The Cenci 98
Britten Sinfonia da Requiem 72
Spring Symphony 72
Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra 72
Bronsart Piano Concerto 77
Bruckner Symphony No. 9 72
Cherubini Requiem 94
Chopin Études, Opp 10 & 25 91
Cimarosa L'Olimpiade 80
Damase Concertos 94
Symphonie 94
Dodgson
Canticle of the Sun etc 82
Danny Elfman
Percussion Concerto 78
Wunderkammer 78
Elgar The Dream of Gerontius 70
Enescu Symphonies Nos 1-3 72
Fauré Ballade 83
La Bonne Chanson 83
L'Horizon chimérique 83
Mélodies 83
Foss Symphony No. 1 etc 73
Glazunov Raymonda 73
Granados Goyescas, Book 1 90
Grieg Bridal Procession 98
Lyric Suite 98
Symphonic Dances etc 98
Haydn
Piano Trios Nos 12, 19, 25 & 43 etc 86
Symphonies Nos 50, 62 & 85 73
Henselt Piano Concerto 77
Horovitz Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo 94
Bill Laurance Bloom 94
Laurence
Piano & Chamber Works 94
Le Beau Piano Quartet in F minor 87
Liszt Piano Sonata in B minor etc 91
G Lloyd A Litany 98
A Symphonic Mass 98
Dan Locklair Choral Works 94
Messiaen
Chants de terre et de ciel 83
Livre du Saint Sacrement 92
La Mort du nombre 83
Poèmes pour mi 83
Meyerbeer
L'Africaine – Vasco da Gama 80
Mozart Horn Concertos 78
Piano Concertos K242 & K365 78
Requiem 94
Symphonies Nos 34-36 74
Violin Sonatas (Trans. Flute) 86
Gabriel Olafs Orchestral Works 94
Payne Half-Heard in Stillness 98
The Seeds Long Hidden 98
Visions and Journeys 98
Poulenc Le Bestiaire 83
Cocardes 83
Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in D minor 78
Le Gendarme incompris 83
Quatre poèmes de Max Jacob 83
Rachmaninov
Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 3 94
Roman Assaggi Per Violino Solo 92
Saint-Saëns Déjanire 81
Schoenberg Lieder/Song 82
Schubert Rondeau brillant 79
R Schumann
Complete Symphonies 74
Sibelius Symphonies Nos 2 & 5 74
Valentin Silvestrov
Postludium for Piano and Orchestra 79
Symphony for Violin and Orchestra 79
Tchaikovsky
String Quartets Nos 1 & 2 etc 87
Ten Holt Canto Ostinato 94
Tippett A Child of Our Time 84
Turina Works for Strings 95
Pēteris Vasks Violin Concerto No. 2 'In Evening Light' etc 79
SS Wesley Sacred Choral Music 84
Ysaÿe Six Sonatas for Solo Violin 95

COLLECTIONS
Alice Coltrane – The Carnegie Hall Concert 1971 Alice Coltrane et al 93
Cantabile – Anthems for Viola
Jordan Bak; Richard Uttley 87
Death Song Book
Paraorchestra et al 95
Four Hands
Alexandre Tharaud & Friends 90
Home Miró Quartet 88
John Culshaw – The Art of the Producer Various Artists 99
The Lamb's Journey
Ensemble Altera 95
Leontyne Price – Personal Choice
Leontyne Price et al 98
Leopold Stokowski – Great Recordings from the BBC Legends Archive Various Artists 99
Metamorphosis
12 Ensemble; Eloisa-Fleur Thom 95
The Muses Restor'd
Rachel Podger; Brecon Baroque 86
Music for Flute by Women Composers Anna Noakes et al 88
Nature is a Mother
Charlie Pyne Quartet 93
A Night at The Village Vanguard
Sonny Rollins 9
Orchestras Bill Frisell et al 93
Peace I leave with you Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford 85
The Pre-Raphaelite Cello
Adrian Bradbury; Andrew West 88
Rachel Baptist – Ireland's Black Syren Rachel Redmond et al 81
Rene Benedetti
Rene Benedetti et al 98
Sea of Stars Lauren Scott 95
Seasons Interrupted
Trey Lee; English Chamber Orch. 79
Simon Rattle – The Berlin Years
Berlin Philharmonic 99
The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow Charles Lloyd et al 93
Stairway to Bach
Sven-Ingvart Mikkelsen 95
Virtuoso Harpsichord Music
Melody Lin 92
Walking the Dog
Andreas Mader; Joseph Moog 95

TV&Radio

Your guide to what's on BBC Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights

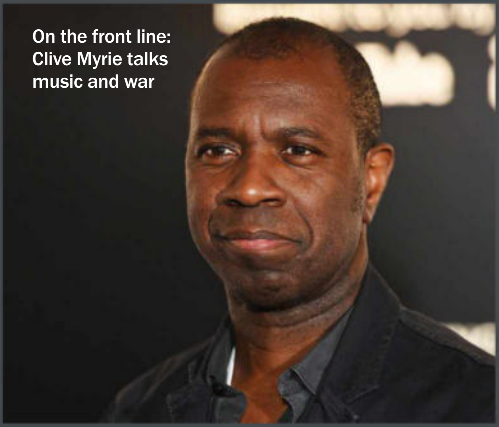
Call of the wild: Petroc Trelawny goes on a musical journey, beginning at Lindisfarne Castle

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

JULY'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see BBC Sounds and iPlayer

Three to look out for



On the front line: Clive Myrie talks music and war

Sam Jackson, the controller of BBC Radio 3, selects three programme highlights for the month of July

Scores to Wars

Clive Myrie talks with fellow journalists John Simpson, Lyse Doucet and Paul Conroy about the music they've been accompanied, comforted and confronted by while reporting from conflicts around the world.
Music Matters: Music on the Frontline, 6, 13 & 20 July, 1pm

Così fan tutte

From the Royal Opera House, Mozart's four-way comedy of pranks and mistaken identity contains some of his greatest and most memorable music, and reveals much about being human: not only the joy but also the pain that so often comes with being in love.
Opera on 3, 13 July, 6pm

Road Trip

Petroc Trelawny explores the rich history, culture, nature and landscape of the north east of England, starting on the island of Lindisfarne, heading inland along Hadrian's Wall, and ending the week at Tynemouth Priory, downstream from the former industrial, now cultural centres of Newcastle and Gateshead.
Breakfast, 22-26 July, 6.30am

1 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Richard Strauss
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Barbican, London. Dallapiccola *Three Questions with Two Answers,* Nono *Canti de vita e d'amore,* Bruno Maderna *Oboe Concerto No. 3,* Berio *Sequenza IXc, Sinfonia.* Nicholas Daniel (oboe), Thomas Lessels (bass clarinet), Anna Dennis (sop), BBC SO/Martyn Brabbins
9.45-10pm The Essay Song Diary of a Dying Man
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

2 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Richard Strauss
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Philharmonie, Berlin. Brahms *Tragic Overture,* Szymanowski *Violin Concerto No.1,* Strauss *Symphonia Domestica.* Lisa Batiashvili (vn), Berlin Phil/Kirill Petrenko
9.45-10pm The Essay Song Diary of a Dying Man
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

3 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Richard Strauss
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm In Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Messiaen *Un sourire,* Wagner *Wesendonck Lieder,* Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique.* Dorothea Röschmann (sop), BBC Phil/Mark Wigglesworth
9.45-10pm The Essay Song Diary of a Dying Man
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

4 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Richard Strauss
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm In Concert
9.45-10pm The Essay Song Diary of a Dying Man
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

5 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Richard Strauss
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Song Diary of a Dying Man
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

6 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier...with Jools Holland
BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 1-2pm Music Matters** Music on the Front Line
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

7 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Sunday Afternoon
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Sunday Feature Undine Smith Moore
8-10pm Drama on 3 Beowulf Retold
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

8 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Thomas Linley the Younger
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In

GETTY

Concert from Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff. Fauré *Pelléas et Mélisande Suite,* McNeff *The Celestial Stranger,* Schoenberg *Verklärte Nacht.* Gavan Ring (ten), BBC NOW/Joana Carneiro
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

9 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Thomas Linley the Younger
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm In Concert from Rudolfinum, Prague. Shostakovich *Symphony No. 7.* Czech Philh/Semyon Bychkov
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

10 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Thomas Linley the Younger
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from City Halls, Glasgow. Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending, Concerto Grosso, Symphony No. 5.* Stephanie Gonley (vn), Scottish Chamber Orch/Andrew Manze
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

11 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Thomas Linley the Younger
5-7pm In Tune
7-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Norwich Cathedral. David Dunnett (organ), BBC Singers/Ashley Grote
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

12 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Thomas Linley the Younger
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

13 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier...with Jools Holland
CHOICE 1-2pm Music Matters Music on the Front Line
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life Neil Tennant
CHOICE 6-9.30pm Opera on 3 from ROH. Mozart *Così fan tutte*
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

14 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Sunday Afternoon
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Sunday Feature Music of the Vikings
8-10pm Drama on 3 Love and Information
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

15 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Silvestre Revueltas
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham. Debussy *Images: Book 2,* Clara Schumann *Romance Op. 21 No. 1,* Chopin *12 Études Op. 25,* Dowland *Lachrimae antiquae,* Purcell *Fantasia No. 7 a 4, In Nomine a 7,* Geminiani *The Last Time I Came O'er the Moor,* MacMillan *From Galloway,* David Fennessy *Excerpts from Rosewoods,* Linda Catlin Smith *Sinfonia,* Cassandra Miller *'Chanter'.* Alim Beisembayev (pf), Sean Shibe (gtr), Dunedin Consort/John Butt
9.45-10pm The Essay Songs of Bialowieza
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

16 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Silvestre Revueltas
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Norwich Cathedral. Arakelyan *Star Fantasy,* Zimmer arr. Lapwood *Interstellar & Inception excerpts*, Glass *Mad Rush*, Britten arr. Lapwood *Four Sea Interludes*, Price *Elf on a Moonbeam*, Debussy arr. Lapwood *Clair de Lune*. Anna Lapwood (organ)
9.45-10pm The Essay Songs of Bialowieza
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

17 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Silvestre Revueltas
5-7pm In Tune

July TV&Radio

Sounds al fresco: a Summer Night at Schönbrunn Palace

TV CHOICE
Summer Night Concert from Vienna

Let yourself be carried away to a balmy evening in the spectacular grounds of Schönbrunn Palace for a highlight of the classical calendar. 2024 marks 20 years since the first annual open-air concert, broadcast to over 80 countries worldwide and free to attend for its local audience of 100,000. Against this majestic backdrop, the Vienna Philharmonic is joined by conductor Andris Nelsons for a programme celebrating Europe's rich musical heritage from the 19th and 20th centuries – and the bicentenary of Czech composer Bedřich Smetana. Soprano Lise Davidsen presents arias from operas such as Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Verdi's *La forza del destino*. With other repertoire including Augusta Holmès's exquisite *La nuit et l'amour* and Khachaturian's catchy *Sabre Dance*, this event promises to be a treat for the the eyes and the ears. *14 July, time TBC, BBC Four*

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Ampleforth Abbey. Holst The *Evening Watch*, Cecilia McDowall *Standing as I do before God*, Francis Pott *The Souls of the Righteous*, Caroline Shaw *and the swallow*, Richard Rodney Bennett *A Good-Night*, Vaughan Williams *Rest*, *Valiant for Truth*, Joel Thompson *A Prayer for Deliverance*, Tavener *Song for Athene*, Pearsall *Lay a Garland*, Sullivan *The Long Day Closes*, Howells *Requiem*, William Harris *Bring us, O Lord God*. Tenebrae/Nigel Short

9.45-10pm The Essay Songs of Bialowieza

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

18 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Silvestre Revueltas

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Gateshead. Dvořák *Cello Concerto*, Kristine Tjøgersen *Between Trees*, Schumann *Symphony No.1*. Steven Isserlis (vc), Royal Northern Sinfonia/Dinis Souza

9.45-10pm The Essay Songs of Bialowieza

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

19 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Classical Live

4-5pm Composer of the Week Silvestre Revueltas

5-6.15pm In Tune

6.15-9pm Prom 1 See p28

9-9.45pm TBC

9.45-10pm The Essay Songs of Bialowieza

10-11.30pm Late Junction

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

20 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast

9am-12noon Saturday Morning

12-1pm Earlier...with Jools Holland

BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 1-2pm** Music Matters Music on the Front Line

2-4pm Record Review

4-5pm Sound of Cinema

5-6pm This Classical Life

6-7pm Music Planet

7-7.30pm New Gen Artists

7.30-10pm Prom 2 See p28

10-10.30pm Between the Ears

10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

21 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast

9-11am Sunday Morning

11am-1pm Prom 3. See p28

1-2.30pm Music Map

2.30-3pm New Gen Artists

3-4pm Choral Evensong

4-5pm Jazz Record Requests

5-6pm The Early Music Show

6-7.30pm Words and Music

7.30-10pm Prom 4. See p28

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

22 MONDAY

BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 6.30-9.30am** Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Prom 1 rpt

4-5pm Composer of the Week Robert Schumann

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-10pm Prom 5. See p28

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

23 TUESDAY

BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 6.30-9.30am** Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Prom 4 rpt

4-5pm Composer of the Week Robert Schumann

5-7pm In Tune

7-9pm Prom 6 See p28

9-10.15pm New Gen Artists

10.15-11.45pm Prom 7. See p28

11.45pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

24 WEDNESDAY

BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 6.30-9.30am** Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Prom 5 rpt

4-5pm Composer of the Week Robert Schumann

5-7pm In Tune

7-10pm Prom 8 See p28

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

25 THURSDAY

BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 6.30-9.30am** Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Prom 6 rpt

4-5pm Composer of the Week Robert Schumann

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-10pm Prom 9. See p28

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

26 FRIDAY

BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 6.30-9.30am** Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Prom 9 rpt

4-5pm Composer of the Week Robert Schumann

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-10.15pm Prom 10. See p28

10.15-11pm New Gen Artists

11pm-12.30am Night Tracks Prom at Glasshouse

27 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast

9am-12noon Saturday Morning

12-1pm Earlier...with Jools Holland

1-3pm Record Review

3-4.30pm Prom 12 See p28

4.30-5.30pm Sound of Cinema

5.30-6.30pm Classical Life

6.30-7.30pm Music Planet

7.30-9.15pm Prom at Glasshouse. See p33

9.15-10pm New Gen Artists

10-11.45pm Prom at Glasshouse BBC Introducing

11.45pm-12.30am New Music Show

28 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast

9am-12pm Sunday Morning

12-1.30pm Private Passions rpt

1.30-3pm Music Map

3-4.30pm Proms Chamber 1 at Glasshouse: Daniel Pioro

4.30-5.30pm Choral Evensong

5.30-6.30pm Jazz Record Requests

6.30-7.30pm Early Music Show

7.30-10pm Prom 13 See p29

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

29 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Prom 10 rpt

4-5pm Composer of the Week Ethel Smyth

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-10.15pm Prom 14. See p29

10.15-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

30 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-4pm Prom 14 rpt

4-5pm Composer of the Week Ethel Smyth

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-10.15pm Prom 15. See p29

10.15-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

31 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-3pm Prom 7 rpt

3-4pm Choral Evensong

4-5pm Composer of the Week Ethel Smyth

5-7pm In Tune

7-7.30pm The Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Prom 16. See p29

9.45-10pm The Essay Dig Where You Stand

10-11.30pm Night Tracks

11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

QUIZ ANSWERS from p 104

1. John Dowland
2. Joseph Haydn
3. Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No. 5, 'Egyptian'
4. Erik Satie
5. Aristophanes
6. Beatrice Rana – who hails from Lecce in Italy
7. The 'frog' is a part of a bow – where the hairs are attached and tightened or loosened
8. *Platée*
9. Edvard Grieg – you can buy a replica of it at Troldhaugen, his house in Bergen, Norway
10. Brian Kay

GETTY

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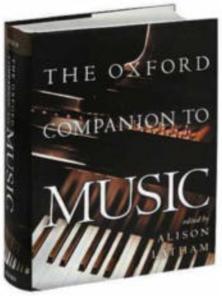
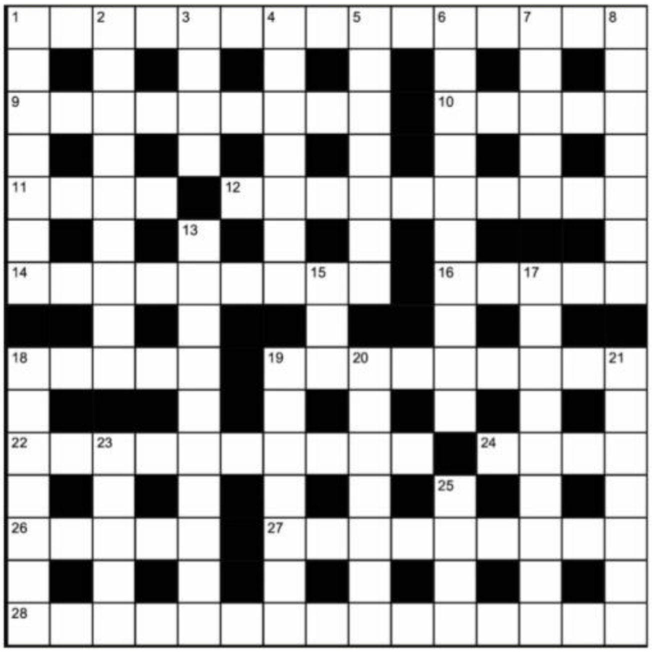
The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 400

Crossword set by **Paul Henderson**



The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win a copy of **The Oxford Companion to Music.** A runner-up will win **Who Knew? Answers to Questions about Classical Music** (see oup.co.uk). Send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 400/July 2024, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 9 July 2024 (solution in Oct 2024 issue).



Your name & address ....

ACROSS

1/12/14 Piece by 22 celebrating its 400th anniversary (2,13,2,8,1,8)
9 Comedy character I ignored during retuning of piano (tonal) (9)
10 Wagner heroine's ecstatic end to aria (5)
11 Stringed instrument that's really real in part (4)
12 See 1 across
14 See 1 across
16 Experimental area provided by an expert in choreography (5)
18 Plays horn, also trumpets heartlessly (5)
19 Part of score cut leading to rage in home of Norwegian orchestra (9)
22 Composer excited by movie trend (10)
24 Perform start of serenade in G (4)
26 Cheers singular feature of Beethoven sonata? (5)
27 Promoter: 'Bar allowed to bring in soprano' (9)
28 You agree tuning is wrong with new Broadway musical (5,3,4,3)

DOWN

1 Jazzy Miles internally turned up beat (7)
2 Singer to study sources of this repertoire a lot, possibly (9)
3 Openings for music even at nuclear base (4)
4 Fix old English cantata's conclusion with an inversion in Ancient Greek mode (7)
5 Horn-call beat a scoundrel reversed (7)
6 Bowed instrument? Odd claim about American was upheld (7,3)
7 Granny that is seen in Brahms choral piece (5)
8 Bridge concerto's ornamental effect missing first three notes (7)
13 Beethoven piece in good place of shelter housing old pair of sopranos (6,4)
15 Spot heroine of Sondheim musical (3)
17 Secure very hot performance in Scotland? (9)
18 Many apt to misrepresent this drum? (7)
19 Pop singer Tommy concealing piano in part of church (7)
20 First of ukuleles I badly played with sufficient volume? (7)
21 Bass quitting seaside resort? Absolutely (5,2)
23 Song among numbers in Scottish town (5)
25 Turning up, welcoming excellent French soprano (4)

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APRIL SOLUTION
No. 397

APRIL WINNER
Irene Hicks, Inverclyde

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THE QUIZ

Are you all clued up? Or haven't the froggiest idea...?

1. Which British composer published his *Frog Galliard* for solo lute in c1597?

2. Composed in 1787, whose String Quartet Op. 50 No. 6 is nicknamed 'The Frog'?

3. The sound of frogs croaking by the River Nile is depicted in which piano concerto of 1896?

4. Setting words by the absurdist poet Léon-Paul Fargue, 'La grenouille américaine' is the third song in *Ludions* ('Let's play), a 1923 song cycle by which composer (whose 1916 song 'La statue de bronze' is also about a frog)?

5. Sondheim's 1974 musical *The Frogs* is based on the comedy of the same name by which Greek playwright?

6. The pianist pictured above has a surname that means 'Frog' in her own language. Who is she?

7. Why are certain string players particularly adept at handling frogs?

8. The title character of which comic opera by Rameau arrives at her mock wedding in a chariot drawn by two frogs?

9. Which composer used to keep a figurine of a frog in his pocket to bring him good luck when playing in a concert?

10. Which conductor and former King's Singer was bass frog in Paul McCartney And The Frog Chorus's 1984 hit 'We all stand together'?

See p102 for answers

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We celebrate the renowned choral ensemble's 45th birthday – and speak to artistic director Harry Christophers as he marks his 70th

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PLUS! *Michael Church* interviews pianist ***Federico Colli***; *Andrew Green* delves into the history of ***seaside orchestras***; *Ariane Todes* asks ***how age affects musicians***; *Meurig Bowen* celebrates 50 glorious years of ***prog rock***; the finest recordings of ***Philip Glass***'s Etudes; and ***Bohuslav Martinů*** is our *Composer of the Month*

JOHN MILLAR, GETTY, SIMON FOWLER, MATTHEW HOLLER

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Andrew Davis

Conductor

British conductor Sir Andrew Davis, who died on 20 April 2024, was a national treasure, popular with soloists, orchestras and audiences everywhere. As conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, his inspiring performances and humorous speeches at a dozen Last Nights of the Proms were beamed round the world. He led orchestras from Glasgow to Toronto, was music director at Glyndebourne and Chicago Lyric Opera, and in the year of his 80th birthday had a full calendar, including a performance of Richard Strauss's *Capriccio* at the Edinburgh Festival, due in August 2024. He gave this interview to *BBC Music Magazine* two weeks before he died.

GETTY

As a boy, I studied the piano at the Royal Academy on Saturday mornings and played the organ for the parish choir in Watford. I used to go to Peter Hurford at St Albans Cathedral for lessons on a Wednesday afternoon, which got me out of games! He was a wonderful teacher and a great player. One day after evensong he played **BACH**'s big E flat Prelude and Fugue, 'St Anne' and I was absolutely blown away by it. Hearing that piece made me decide that's what I wanted to do in the next part of my life. I still play a huge amount of Bach and the magisterial 'St Anne' remains my favourite of his organ pieces.

I started to conduct at Cambridge and studied in Rome for a year in 1967 before coming back to London. I applied to be assistant conductor at the BBC Scottish Symphony and was offered the job, but before I took it, Sir William Glock, who had been on the audition panel, asked me at four days' notice to conduct the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, including **JANÁČEK**'s *Glagolitic Mass*, which I'd never conducted. It's a big piece, but I'm a quick learner and I was pretty confident when it came to the concert. I was asked to conduct it again, in May 1974 with the Toronto Symohony, whose distinguished chief conductor, Karel Ančerl, had just died. It must have gone well, as a month later I was offered the post of chief conductor.

In summer 1972, Sir John Pritchard, music director at Glyndebourne, invited me to be his assistant on a new production of **STRAUSS**'s *Capriccio*. I said, honestly, that I had no experience of conducting opera. 'Yes, we know that,' he said firmly. He remarked that more things could go wrong in opera than in any other field of human endeavour, 'but when it goes right, there's nothing like it'. I conducted *Capriccio* at Glyndebourne three times while I was music director there, with wonderful casts, including soprano Elisabeth Söderström. It has stayed very fresh with me, and if you said to me now, 'You have to conduct it in 15 minutes,' I could definitely do it!

I wasn't a huge **ELGAR** fan in my student days, but I have since performed his music many times, especially *The Dream of Gerontius*, which means a great deal to me. It's an extraordinarily moving work – you don't have to be a practising Catholic to get its message. I first conducted it in Liverpool with the RLPO and renowned British tenor Richard Lewis; it was almost the last time he ever sang Gerontius and he and I were both very moved. I've conducted Janet Baker as the Angel, and given a televised performance from St Paul's Cathedral. It's been a huge part of my life.

My exposure to **MICHAEL TIPPETT** started at the Royal Academy Saturday school. Our tutor Graham Treacher press-ganged us into playing in Tippett's *Crown of the Year* with his Hampstead children's choir. I played piano and Tippett came and was very nice. I became an apostle for his music and slightly anti-Britten, which was very childish! I did some of his pieces with the BBC Scottish SO and I got to know him very well. The Fourth Symphony is one of his greatest works. Everything about it is so right – the timing, the clear structure – but it's extremely difficult. I must have done it about four times with the BBC SO and when we toured it in Vienna, I was nervous about its reception. But they went crazy for it, and I think this is a symphony that will stand the test of time.

Interview by Amanda Holloway

The choices

Bach Prelude and Fugue, 'St Anne'
Peter Hurford (organ)
Decca 443 4852

Janáček Glagolitic Mass
Czech Philharmonic/Karel Ancerl
Supraphon SU36672

R Strauss Capriccio
R Fleming et al; Vienna State Opera/ Christoph Eschenbach *C Major 715908*

Elgar The Dream of Gerontius
Skelton, Connolly et al; BBC Symphony Orchestra/Davis *Chandos CHSA5140(2)*

Tippett Symphony No. 4
BBC SO/Tippett *NMC NMCD104*

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